

Yosemite National Park to remain closed after wind damage

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Jan 21, 2021

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — Yosemite National Park will remain closed through the weekend after high winds that battered much of California knocked down two giant sequoias and caused millions of dollars in damage.

The park hoped to reopen Tuesday except for areas south of Yosemite Valley, including one entrance, that will remain shut to visitors, the park said Thursday.

High winds that began Monday swept through the state, toppling trees and power lines and knocking out electricity to about 300,000 homes and businesses. Utilities also intentionally blacked out tens of thousands of customers to prevent fires erupting from damaged or downed electrical equipment.

The winds eased Tuesday in the northern and central areas and Wednesday in the south.

Yosemite was struck Monday night. Two giant sequoias in the lower grove of Yosemite's Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias were among trees that fell, park spokesman Scott Gediman told the Sacramento Bee.

Trees also crushed trucks and damaged buildings, including employee homes. Also crushed were a boardwalk and bathroom installed during a \$40 million restoration that was finished in 2018, Gediman said.

Crews were working to repair downed electrical lines, especially in the Wawona community, a south park area that remained without power on Thursday, Gediman said.

Among the areas closed until deemed safe was the Tunnel View, a scenic viewpoint on State Route 41 in the Wawona area that offers sweeping views of such icons as Half Dome and Bridalveil Fall.

The park is only open to day visitors. Campgrounds and lodges have been closed for several weeks because the park is trying to reduce the chances of visitors spreading the coronavirus.

[Bakersfield Californian, Other Voices Friday, Jan. 22, 2021](#)

Biden must focus on affordable, reliable electricity

By Matthew Kandrach

Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, along with a new Biden administration, promise sweeping policy changes in the United States. This includes campaign pledges to remake America's electricity mix. But with campaign season over, Democrats should put rhetoric aside and pursue a bipartisan energy plan that supports economic recovery.

During the 2020 campaign, Joe Biden pledged to "achieve a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035." Doing so would mean essentially — in a mere 14 years — eliminating all of the fossil-fuel power plants currently supplying 63 percent of America's electricity needs. It's just this type of plan that could prove crippling to the U.S. economy — eliminating millions of jobs and driving up energy prices while offering only vague promises on replacing longstanding power generation or managing additional costs.

Both the U.S. and Europe already have some experience with this kind of aggressive transition away from traditional fuels toward more renewable power. And the results are troubling.

For example, California's shift to a renewable-heavy grid has already yielded some of the nation's highest electricity prices as well as serious grid reliability issues. During a heatwave this summer, California suffered rolling blackouts when demand outstripped the state's available power supply.

Texas has experienced a similar shock, now that its power mix increasingly relies on wind generation. The state's pivot away from traditional baseload power toward weather-dependent electricity has led to worrying shortfalls—including a 2019 summer heatwave when insufficient wind conditions caused electricity prices to spike as much as 36,000 percent.

New England has seen price increases, too. Rapidly transitioning away from a balanced electricity mix that once included coal has meant dire fuel security warnings from the region's grid operator along with electricity prices now running almost twice the national average.

The same problems are cropping up overseas. Germany's "energiewende" movement toward full-scale wind and solar power has driven German electricity prices to three times the U.S. average.

Japan is also seeing record electricity prices as grid operators warn that available power isn't keeping up with demand. And even the UK power grid is showing signs of strain. Britain's grid manager has already issued four warnings this winter, with power demand on the verge of exceeding supply. It's an alarmingly common occurrence now that the nation has shifted to greater reliance on intermittent wind generation.

The Biden administration is taking office at a time of serious economic disruption from the COVID pandemic. The new president may be eager to roll out a comprehensive energy agenda. But the American people can ill-afford the hefty additional costs right now.

Families depend on reliable, affordable electricity. Yes, there's great appeal to incorporating more solar and wind power in the nation's electric grid. But the priority must be to ensure secure, affordable power for 330 million people. It would be a grave mistake to hurriedly abandon the nation's current, diverse electricity mix in favor of costly power generation that could prove insufficient when it's needed most.