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## State parks officials deliberately hid millions, report says

**Fear of embarrassment and budget cuts led high officials to conceal the money, which remained hidden for years until it was exposed by a new staff member, according to attorney general's investigation.**

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

10:05 PM PST, January 4, 2013

SACRAMENTO — Fear of embarrassment and budget cuts led high officials at the California parks department to conceal millions of dollars, according to a new investigation by the state attorney general's office.

The money remained hidden for years until it was exposed by a new staff member who described a culture of secrecy and fear at the department.

The attorney general's report, released Friday, is the most detailed official account so far of the financial scandal at the parks department. The controversy broke last summer with the revelation that parks officials had a hidden surplus of nearly \$54 million at a time when the administration was threatening to close dozens of the facilities.

Although much of the accounting issues appeared to stem from innocent mistakes and discrepancies, the report said, about \$20 million had been deliberately stashed away.

The report said the problem seemed to begin with calculation errors more than a decade ago. But when those mistakes were discovered in 2002, officials made a "conscious and deliberate" decision not to reveal the existence of the extra money, the report said.

Parks officials concealed the funds partly because they were embarrassed, the report said. But they were also worried that their funding would be cut further if state number-crunchers knew they had a larger reserve, according to interviews conducted by a deputy attorney general.

Parks officials underreported the amount of money they had to the Department of Finance, preventing lawmakers from including the extra funds in state spending plans.

The money "was intended to be a safety net," said Manuel Lopez, a former deputy director at the department, who was interviewed in the probe. Lopez resigned in May while being investigated for a separate scheme allowing employees to be improperly paid for unused vacation days.

Multiple high-ranking officials were involved in concealing the parks money, including Lopez and Michael Harris, the chief deputy director who was fired after the scandal broke. Evidence suggests that the initial decision to keep the money secret was made by Tom Domich, an assistant deputy director who

left the department in 2004, the report said.

Domich "unpersuasively denies ... his role in the deception," according to the report. The Times was unable to reach Domich on Friday.

Staff members who pointed out financial problems were ignored by their bosses.

"Throughout this period of intentional non-disclosure, some parks employees consistently requested, without success, that their superiors address the issue," the report said.

It is unclear whether ousted director Ruth Coleman knew about the accounting problems, the report said. She declined to be interviewed for the investigation; participation was voluntary for former parks personnel.

Officials have not yet determined whether criminal charges will be filed. There's no evidence that any money was stolen or used improperly, the report said.

The accounting problems were eventually exposed by Aaron Robertson, who started an administrative job at the parks department in January 2012. He told a deputy attorney general that people felt uncomfortable raising concerns at the department.

"There was a great deal of distrust," he said. "People felt somewhat fearful of coming forward with information."

John Laird, the California natural resources secretary who oversees the parks department, said new policies and staff are in place to prevent similar problems in the future.

"It is now clear that this is a problem that could have been fixed by a simple correction years ago, instead of being unaddressed for so long that it turned into a significant blow to public trust in government," Laird said in a statement.

A new parks director, retired Marine Maj. Gen. Anthony Jackson, was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown to replace Coleman in November. Robertson was promoted to become his deputy.

The attorney general's investigation is the third report on the parks department in the last month. One more report, from the state auditor, is due this month.

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## Counts drop for all six imperiled Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta fish species in latest survey

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Published Tuesday, Jan. 08, 2013

Any hopes that six imperiled Delta fish species might be trending back from the brink of extinction have been dashed by a new population survey: Counts for all six species got worse in 2012.

The species, all residents of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, include Delta smelt, a protected finger-size fish, and striped bass, an introduced species that is a popular sportfish. All six saw a severe population crash starting in 2002 that is still the subject of debate and controversy.

The decline halted in 2011, when a wet winter improved aquatic habitat. All six species rebounded, though not to pre-2002 levels.

In the latest trawl-net survey of the estuary, conducted each fall since 1967, the gains of 2011 were lost. All six species returned to their prior low numbers, according to the survey, conducted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"In a nutshell, we just went back to the baseline. And it's not particularly good," said Randy Baxter, a supervising environmental scientist at the department.

One species, threadfin shad, set a record low population in the latest survey. The fish is not native to the Delta, but because it shares the same habitat, it is considered an important indicator of estuary health.

"The fact that it's doing poorly is indicative of a pretty broad-ranging problem," Baxter said.

Wildlife officials began their annual fall count of the six species decades ago because they are relatively easy to count by dragging a net through the water. The trend in their abundance is considered an important measure of the Delta's ecological productivity.

State and federal wildlife experts have spent a decade trying to understand why the species remain in steep decline. They have found no simple answer, but rather a combination of factors, including water diversions, pollution and competition with invasive species.

Baxter noted that 2012 was a relatively dry year, which may have contributed to the latest decline. Less rain and snowmelt runoff mean less aquatic habitat, less water to dilute pollutants, and changes in the way food is produced and available to fish.

The big controversy still clusters around freshwater flows into, and out of, the estuary. These flows are tightly controlled by California's vast network of dams, canals and pumps and the demands of the people and crops that depend on that infrastructure.

"What we're finding is that when flows are below a certain threshold, the (fish) populations are just going to continue to decline," said Jon Rosenfield, a conservation biologist at The Bay Institute, a nonprofit that supports revamping flows to benefit fish. "Last year, flows returned to their more recently normal state of being really bad, and all of the populations declined."

Because California has fully tapped the state's available water resources – parceling the flows among homes, farms, industry and wildlife – any adjustment to benefit fish necessarily comes at a cost to urban or agricultural water consumers.

Many water agencies that divert from the Delta point the finger for the species' declines at other culprits, such as water pollution, habitat losses and invasive species that eat native fish or displace their food.

Mike Wade, executive director of the California Farm Water Coalition, argues that instead of doing more about these other problems, regulators always move to curtail water exports when fish are imperiled.

"I think it's clear the effort to try and solve the problem by limiting exports is failing," Wade said. "That's the only knob we've been turning, so maybe that's not the solution."

Wildlife agencies turn that knob using the legal muscle of the Endangered Species Act. When a protected species such as Delta smelt shows up dead in water diversion systems, the diverters are required to take less water. The two major diversion pumping systems near Tracy are operated by the state Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

No such pumping reductions were ordered to protect the six species during the 2012 water year, which ended Sept. 30, said Mike Chotkowski, Sacramento field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The species likely benefitted, however, from pumping reductions carried out to protect salmon, which are not part of the latest survey.

Terry Erlewine, general manager of the State Water Contractors, said the salmon rules cost water diverters about 660,000 acre-feet in lost water supplies, or enough to serve more than 1.2 million households for a year.

Even so, the fish populations declined.

More recently, the Fish and Wildlife Service on Dec. 17 ordered pumping reductions to protect Delta smelt, after 90 were killed, or "entrained," at the pumps. The order was carried out partly because biologists have realized that smelt tend to favor muddy water. The fish seem to have an easier time finding food in muddy water, and it helps them hide from predators.

In flood conditions on the Sacramento River, this muddy or "turbid" water is drawn toward the pumps, and so are the smelt.

Chotkowski said the latest pumping reductions helped protect smelt. The numbers of fish killed dropped off sharply once the pumps began drawing less turbidity through the Delta.

"I think we'd be quite a bit worse off if we had not taken this action," he said.

Erlewine estimates the latest pumping cutbacks cost about 300,000 acre-feet in lost water deliveries. But he agreed it may have been beneficial to the smelt. If short-term cutbacks keyed to turbidity prove effective, he said, it may prevent more painful cuts.

"We've been interested in figuring out ways ... to avoid having the high pumping when turbidity is there," Erlewine said. "There's been a fairly high water cost. I think we're all learning in this."

ENVIRONMENTLEARN MORE: The Delta fish population data can be found online at <http://ht.ly/gCbBn>

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# White flag over Fox Beach: A coastal community considers a permanent retreat from the water



BY DANA RUBINSTEIN

2:54 pm Jan. 7, 2013 | 1

“People should not be living here,” said Joseph Monte.

He was standing on the little piece of Staten Island he’s called home for 22 years, and arguing that it would be better if no one lived there at all.

“Turn this into what it should have been and what it was a 100 years ago, a natural area for the grounds to take the water,” he said.

Until Hurricane Sandy rendered it uninhabitable, Monte, who owned his own construction company for two decades, lived in a grey clapboard house in Fox Beach, a subsection of Oakwood Beach on Staten Island’s southeastern flank. In good times, it was a nice place to live, and some families lived there for generations, in low-slung bungalows with American flags, just a couple of blocks from the sea.



Fox Beach after a recent storm. Joseph Tirone

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But the neighborhood has had its downsides. [Brush fires are a big issue, thanks to all the tall grass that turns to kindling in dry weather.](#) So is flooding, a perennial, worsening problem that has proven resistant to small-bore fixes like berms and floodgates.

In the aftermath of the last big hurricane, whose surges swept more than 10 feet of water through the neighborhood and killed three residents, that problem has begun to appear insurmountable.

Today, residents are banding together in an effort to convince the government that their neighborhood should go away. The people of Fox Beach—more than 60 percent of them, according to one homeowner’s count—want a buy-out.

“If they tell people, ‘Listen, you’re on your own, we’re not helping you, we’re not buying you out,’ you’re gonna see more deaths here,” said Neil Filipowicz, who, after the hurricane, found the bodies of his brother and nephew, [embracing](#), in the basement of their Fox Beach home. “I guarantee it.”

**MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG SEEMS TO THINK** the idea of retreating from the waterfront in the face of rising sea levels is defeatist, or at least unrealistic.

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from places like Coney Island and the Rockaways, [the mayor said](#), "I do not agree with those people that say everybody's gonna move out of the low-lying areas of Staten Island, Coney Island, Breezy Point, the Rockaways. These places are still great places to live."

The following week, during what was billed as a major infrastructure speech, the mayor said the solution was not retreat, but rather the construction of flood-resistant buildings.

"We're not gonna leave the Rockaways or Coney Island or Staten Island's South Shore," he said. "But we can't just rebuild what was there and hope for the best. We have to build smarter and stronger and more sustainably."

Shaun Donovan, the president's Hurricane Sandy point person, has a slightly different take on the matter.

"I've seen in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, communities where the local community made the decision not to rebuild, to do buyouts, to allow people to move," [he told reporters in December](#). "Those are very, very hard decisions, but there are discussions going on right now in communities across the region about those."

**THOSE DISCUSSIONS ARE VERY MUCH UNDERWAY** in Fox Beach, prompted by a local landlord named Joseph Tirone, owner of a one-bedroom, one-story bungalow there.

During the hurricane, stormwaters topped out at 10 feet outside his house, and six feet inside. His tenants lost all of their belongings, except for the ones they put on a mattress that floated to the ceiling. They have since moved to Arkansas, and Tirone has gutted his building to the studs. He is not planning to rebuild.

Instead, he, along with many of his neighbors, wants the federal government to buy them out, effectively erasing the neighborhood and returning it to nature.

There's a federal program, run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, that actually underwrites that sort of thing. It's called the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, and according to the state Division of Homeland Security, it has been used successfully upstate to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, but never before in New York City.

"People are coming to us saying, 'Can we take advantage of this program?', and I think it's our job to help them along in that process," Councilman Vincent Ignizio told me.

But the process is by no means an easy one.

"Remember, there's a lot to this that has to be understood," said Staten Island Borough President James Molinaro. "In life, it is worse to live in false hope than in no hope at all. So as a chief executive officer, I'm not going to give anybody false hopes."

In order for the Fox Beach residents to succeed, they, along with their elected officials, will have to convince the Bloomberg administration to petition the state for grant money.

The state, in turn, will have to petition FEMA. If FEMA obliges, its grants will cover only 75 percent of the acquisition costs, the rest theoretically covered by the city and state, if they go along with it. Which is a substantial "if," given that they'd essentially be paying for a reduction of their tax-paying base, and setting precedent to do so on a broader basis.

"Don't look at getting anything from the city or the state," said Molinaro. "If it comes, then God bless you, but don't look at that. Because you gotta realize, the city is already losing real estate tax, they're not gonna add more money to that loss. That's my opinion."

In a statement, Lauren Passalacqua, a spokeswoman for the mayor, said, "The Mayor is committed to working with each community on plans to help them recover and rebuild stronger and more resilient to future climate events. While it's too early to know if a buyout option makes sense in certain cases, we'll certainly consider it for those interested."

Even if the city does ultimately decide to play ball, Molinaro told me that for homes that were not completely destroyed, the process typically takes three to five years, which is a pretty long time to live in limbo.

**A WEEK AFTER THE STORM, MONTE, THE OWNER** of the grey clapboard house, returned home with a box of paper towels and four bottles of window cleaner.

"I stood in the middle of the house and I started getting upset and I called my wife and I said, 'What am I doing here with paper towels and Fantastik?'" he told me. "We're done, the house is done. Everything that we did here, that we built for our future, for our retirement, is done."

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Monte was standing outside his home during our interview, bundled against the cold in a puffy black vest. His front door was covered in plywood.

"They're going around talking about people rebuilding, rebuilding ... How do you live in here?" he asked, with disbelief.

There are about 165 homes in Foxbeach. At last count, 105 homeowners were interested in getting buy-outs and leaving.

Many of those homes border the Bluebelt, Staten Island's natural stormwater management system, which relies on infrastructure like streams and ponds and wetlands to channel and then filter water back into the ocean.

Tirone, Monte and their neighbors are hoping that the Bloomberg administration will see, in their buyout requests, a rare opportunity to achieve two goals at once: expanding the Bluebelt and mitigating against future disasters.

But of course City Hall has other things to consider.

"Is the administration fully on board with an acquisition process? That's question number one," said Councilman James Oddo. "Two, if they are, how much money will we have, and will that be able to satisfy the interest?"

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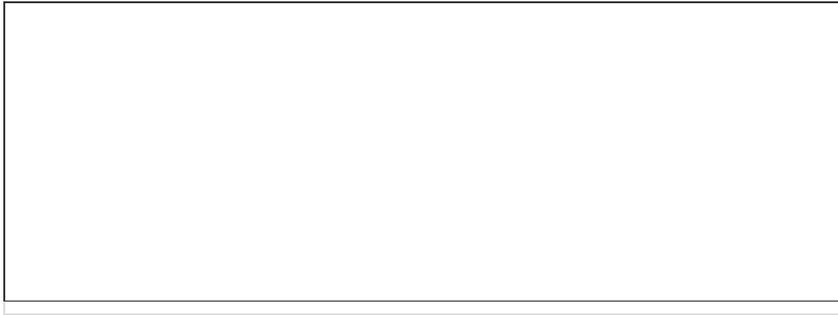
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## Open future for city's maritime past

John Wildermuth

Updated 8:57 am, Thursday, January 10, 2013

The ghosts of San Francisco's maritime past are getting some new company along the southern waterfront as the city works to bring people to sites previously open only to ships and seafarers.

From AT&T Park south to the county line, long-idle grain silos, copra docks and cargo yards are being converted into public spaces designed to link the city's growing population with those years when San Francisco's bustling seaport ruled the West Coast.

"Attracting people to the waterfront is a goal of the port," said David Beaupre, a senior waterfront planner for the Port of San Francisco. "We want to maximize public access."

In recent years, the port has worked with the city's Recreation and Park Department to put bikeways, shoreline parks and wildlife areas on land it owns along the bay. Using money from the city's 2008 park bond and other sources, the port has provided open space to a part of the city where it's desperately needed, with more to come.

Much of the work is along what's being called the Blue Greenway, a project started in 2006 by then-Mayor Gavin Newsom to link the 13 miles of shoreline between China Basin and the San Mateo County line near Candlestick Point.

"This is a fantastic thing for San Francisco," said former Supervisor Aaron Peskin, an early backer of the greenway plan. "As those neighborhoods have become less industrial, there has been a growing need for recreation facilities and open space."

### Open the gates

While the individual pieces may be small, they combine into something far bigger and more important.

Bayfront Park, for example, is 6 acres of shoreline between Pier 54 and Mission Rock. The port spent \$2.6 million to turn an area that was little more than rotting piers into a popular Mission Bay recreation site, with benches and a bayside pathway.

"The day we took the fence down, people started using it," Beaupre said.

The port also added a three-quarter-mile bikeway along Cargo Way from Third Street to Jennings Street, protected from traffic by a fence and featuring its own, cyclist-only traffic signals, the first in San Francisco.

The bikeway is part of a larger, \$3 million project to provide a gateway to the Bayview district at Third and Cargo.

Plans call for picnic tables, play structures and landscape improvements at that corner, once the site of a weigh station and storage facility. There will also be some gateway artwork at the corner, visibly linking the rest of the city to the Bayview.

### 'Residents are thrilled'

"I'm excited about this and the entire greenway project," said Supervisor Malia Cohen, who represents much of the southern waterfront. "Bayview residents are thrilled to get their own identity, to see the southeast opened up to the entire city."

More work is slated for Islais Creek. Tulare Park, an aging, hard-to-find facility between Third and Illinois streets, will get a \$1 million upgrade, adding a wooden walkway, seating and picnic areas, shoreline improvements and access for the disabled.

At Pier 92, the soaring, iconic grain silos, unused since the late 1970s, will become the site of a public art display. An interactive light show, a huge "Etch-u-Sketch" display, an animated mural and a "Peace" painting are the four finalists for the art project, which is expected to be done by early 2014.

Visitors to the new parks will get education along with their recreation. At Pier 84, until the 1970s dried coconut meat, known as copra, was brought in from the Philippines and pressed into oil at a nearby mill. The five-story copra crane used to unload the ships has been taken down for restoration and will be the centerpiece of an informational exhibit "that will allow people to come down and learn about the city's labor history and cargo handling," Beaupre said.

### Funding questions

Plenty of plans remain on the drawing board. Crane Cove Park, near Pier 70, is slated to become 9 acres of open space, with access to the bay, for nearby Dogpatch residents. But there are plenty of issues that still need to be settled, including funding.

"It's a \$44 million project and right now we have \$21 million," Beaupre said.

But it's the chance to enjoy the bay, even amid the clamor and clang of the maritime work that still is a major feature of the city's industrial life, that will draw most visitors.

Heron's Head Park, at the end of Cargo Way, is a shipping terminal that was never built. Originally opened in 1999 as a wildlife preserve and open space, the port spent \$2.5 million in park bond money to put in an off-leash dog run, a new meadow, picnic areas, pathways and a 25-car parking lot. The park reopened in November, with Mayor Ed Lee, port officials and conservationists there to hail the effort.

### **100 species of birds**

Children, birders, photographers and people just out for a stroll use the park, which includes a salt marsh that draws more than 100 species of birds. A path juts well out into the bay along a narrow, windblown spit of land, with the marsh on one side and a shipyard and cargo terminal on the other, just across a slender channel. Cries of seabirds mingle with the industrial noise to provide a soundtrack for the 24-acre park.

Eric Embry, a Bernal Heights resident, was on a walk along the shoreline, bundled against the stiff breeze blowing in from the bay.

"I love it out here; when you get to the end, it feels as though you're on the bow of a ship," he said. "There aren't many places like this in San Francisco."

### **Greenway plans**

Information about the city's Blue Greenway plan can be found at [bit.ly/U5E9UF](http://bit.ly/U5E9UF)

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**The New York Times**

January 10, 2013

# Heat, Flood or Icy Cold, Extreme Weather Rages Worldwide

By **SARAH LYALL**

WORCESTER, England — Britons may remember 2012 as the year the weather spun off its rails in a chaotic concoction of drought, deluge and flooding, but the unpredictability of it all turns out to have been all too predictable: Around the world, extreme has become the new commonplace.

Especially lately. China is [enduring its coldest winter](#) in nearly 30 years. Brazil is in the grip of a [dreadful heat spell](#). Eastern Russia is so freezing — minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and counting — that the traffic lights recently stopped working in the city of Yakutsk.

Bush fires are [raging across Australia](#), fueled by a record-shattering heat wave. Pakistan was inundated by unexpected [flooding in September](#). A vicious storm bringing rain, snow and floods just struck the Middle East. And in the United States, scientists confirmed this week what people could have figured out simply by going outside: [last year was the hottest](#) since records began.

“Each year we have extreme weather, but it’s unusual to have so many extreme events around the world at once,” said Omar Baddour, chief of the data management applications division at the World Meteorological Organization, in Geneva. “The heat wave in Australia; the flooding in the U.K., and most recently the flooding and extensive snowstorm in the Middle East — it’s already a big year in terms of extreme weather calamity.”

Such events are increasing in intensity as well as frequency, Mr. Baddour said, a sign that climate change is not just about rising temperatures, but also about intense, unpleasant, anomalous weather of all kinds.

Here in Britain, people are used to thinking of rain as the wallpaper on life’s computer screen — an omnipresent, almost comforting background presence. But even the hardiest citizen was rattled by the near-biblical fierceness of the rains that bucketed down, and the floods that followed, three different times in 2012.

Rescuers plucked people by boat from their swamped homes in St. Asaph, North Wales. Whole areas of the country were cut off when roads and train tracks were inundated at Christmas. In Mevagissey, Cornwall, a pub owner closed his business for good after it flooded

11 times in two months.

It was no anomaly: the floods of 2012 followed the floods of 2007 and also the floods of 2009, which all together have resulted in nearly \$6.5 billion in insurance payouts. The Met Office, Britain's weather service, declared 2012 the wettest year in England, and the second-wettest in Britain as a whole, since records began more than 100 years ago. Four of the five wettest years in the last century have come in the past decade (the fifth was in 1954).

The biggest change, said Charles Powell, a spokesman for the Met Office, is the frequency in Britain of "extreme weather events" — defined as rainfall reaching the top 1 percent of the average amount for that time of year. Fifty years ago, such episodes used to happen every 100 days; now they happen every 70 days, he said.

The same thing is true in Australia, where bush fires are raging across Tasmania and the current heat wave has come after two of the country's wettest years ever. On Tuesday, Sydney experienced its fifth-hottest day since records began in 1910, with the temperature climbing to 108.1 degrees. The first eight days of 2013 were among the 20 hottest on record.

Every decade since the 1950s has been hotter in Australia than the one before, said Mark Stafford Smith, science director of the Climate Adaptation Flagship at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization.

To the north, the extremes have swung the other way, with a band of cold settling across Russia and Northern Europe, bringing thick snow and howling winds to Stockholm, Helsinki and Moscow. (Incongruously, there were also severe snowstorms in Sicily and southern Italy for the first time since [World War II](#); in December, tornadoes and waterspouts struck the Italian coast.)

In Siberia, thousands of people were left without heat when natural gas liquefied in its pipes and water mains burst. Officials canceled bus transportation between cities for fear that roadside breakdowns could lead to deaths from exposure, and motorists were advised not to venture far afield except in columns of two or three cars. In Altai, to the east, traffic officials warned drivers not to use poor-quality diesel, saying that it could become viscous in the cold and clog fuel lines.

Meanwhile, China is enduring its worst winter in recent memory, with frigid temperatures recorded in Harbin, in the northeast. In the western region of Xinjiang, more than 1,000 houses collapsed under a relentless onslaught of snow, while in Inner Mongolia, 180,000 livestock froze to death. The cold has wreaked havoc with crops, sending the price of vegetables soaring.

Way down in South America, energy analysts say that Brazil may face electricity rationing for the first time since 2002, as a heat wave and a lack of rain deplete the reservoirs for [hydroelectric](#) plants. The summer has been punishingly hot. The temperature in Rio de Janeiro climbed to 109.8 degrees on Dec. 26, the city's highest temperature since official records began in 1915.

At the same time, in the Middle East, Jordan is battling a storm packing torrential rain, snow, hail and floods that are cascading through tunnels, sweeping away cars and spreading misery in Syrian refugee camps. Amman has been virtually paralyzed, with cars abandoned, roads impassable and government offices closed.

Israel and the [Palestinian](#) territories are grappling with similar conditions, after a week of intense rain and cold winds ushered in a snowstorm that dumped eight inches in Jerusalem alone.

Amir Givati, head of the surface water department at the Israel Hydrological Service, said the storm was truly unusual because of its duration, its intensity and its breadth. Snow and hail fell not just in the north, but as far south as the desert city of Dimona, best known for its nuclear reactor.

In Beirut on Wednesday night, towering waves crashed against the Corniche, the seaside promenade downtown, flinging water and foam dozens of feet in the air as lightning flickered across the dark sea at multiple points along the horizon. Many roads were flooded as hail pounded the city.

Several people died, including a baby boy in a family of shepherds who was swept out of his mother's arms by floodwaters. The greatest concern was for the 160,000 Syrian refugees who have fled to Lebanon, taking shelter in schools, sheds and, where possible, with local families. Some refugees are living in farm outbuildings, which are particularly vulnerable to cold and rain.

Barry Lynn, who runs a forecasting business and is a lecturer at the Hebrew University's department of earth science, said a striking aspect of the whole thing was the severe and prolonged cold in the upper atmosphere, a big-picture shift that indicated the Atlantic Ocean was no longer having the moderating effect on weather in the Middle East and Europe that it has historically.

"The intensity of the cold is unusual," Mr. Lynn said. "It seems the weather is going to become more intense; there's going to be more extremes."

In Britain, where changes to the positioning of the jet stream — a ribbon of air high up in the

atmosphere that helps steer weather systems — may be contributing to the topsy-turvy weather, people are still recovering from the December floods. In Worcester last week, the river Severn remained flooded after three weeks, with playing fields buried under water.

In the shop at the Worcester Cathedral, Julie Smith, 54, was struggling, she said, to adjust to the new uncertainty.

“For the past seven or eight years, there’s been a serious incident in a different part of the country,” Mrs. Smith said. “We don’t expect extremes. We don’t expect it to be like this.”

*Reporting was contributed by Jodi Rudoren from Jerusalem; Irit Pazner Garshowitz from Tzur Hadassah, Israel; Fares Akram from Gaza City, Gaza; Ellen Barry and Andrew Roth from Moscow; Ranya Kadri from Amman, Jordan; Dan Levin from Harbin, China; Jim Yardley from New Delhi; Anne Barnard from Beirut, Lebanon; Matt Siegel from Sydney, Australia; Scott Sayare from Paris; and Simon Romero from Rio de Janeiro.*

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

***Correction: January 11, 2013***

An earlier version of this article misstated part of the name of the organization for which Omar Baddour works. It is the World Meteorological Organization, not the World Meteorological Association. It also misspelled the name of a location in Cornwall, England. It is Mevagissey, not Megavissey.