

Summary: The Challenge of the Future

A Great State

California leads the nation in many areas. It has the most people and has the most diverse population in the nation. It has one-fourth of the country's largest cities. California is the leading state in agriculture and industry. Some of the best colleges and universities in the world are in California.

Plants and animals that exist nowhere else can be found here. From beautiful beaches, to farmland, to stunning mountain scenery, Californians have a lot to be proud of!

In the 1970s, southern California had a problem with air pollution. One cause was exhaust, or smoke, from car and truck engines. Harmful chemicals from the exhaust mixed with the air. California lawmakers passed new laws to deal with the problem. Using a type of gas that creates less exhaust has made the air cleaner. Other states have followed with their own laws about cleaner gasoline. California leads the country in protecting the air.

Today's Challenges

California is one of the country's fastest growing states. Its growing population needs food, water, homes, electricity, and transportation. The challenge is to find ways to provide these needs while protecting the environment. One way is by California communities recycling glass, plastic, paper, and other materials to keep them out of landfills. Recycling saves resources and energy. Protecting water resources is one of the state's greatest challenges, as parts of the state do not get enough rain. Dams, canals, and reservoirs must get water to people and farms.

But these engineering projects have changed the environment. Damming wild rivers harms plants and animals in the watershed. If people use too much water, underground water sources dry up. Then water is taken from rivers and lakes, hurting the watershed. New technology helps farmers use less water for irrigation. The state has also started some water recycling programs. By learning from the past and taking action today, Californians prepare for the future.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

recycle *verb*, to reuse materials, such as glass and plastic, to make new goods

landfill *noun*, a site where trash is buried in the ground

watershed *noun*, a region that drains into a river system



After You Read

REVIEW In what way did new laws make air cleaner in California? Underline the sentences that explain how the laws helped solve the problem.

REVIEW What problems are created by dams, canals, and reservoirs? Highlight the sentences that explain how the environment is hurt by engineering projects.