



TRUCKEE MEADOWS WATER AUTHORITY
Board of Directors

AGENDA

Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
Virtual meeting only.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND VIA THE WEB LINK, OR
TELEPHONICALLY BY CALLING THE NUMBER, LISTED BELOW.
NO PHYSICAL LOCATION IS BEING PROVIDED FOR THIS MEETING

(be sure to keep your phones or microphones on mute, and do not place the call on hold)

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://tmwa.zoom.us/j/93199705901?pwd=b1BNd2hHM2pqVkVhZFIcGzV1NkUT09>

Password: 205040

Or call:

Phone: (888) 788-0099

Webinar ID: 931 9970 5901

Board Members

Chair Vaughn Hartung

Member Neoma Jardon

Member Jenny Brekhus

Member Paul Anderson

Vice Chair Kristopher Dahir

Member Alexis Hill

Member Naomi Duerr

NOTES:

1. This meeting is being conducted pursuant to the Governor's Declaration of Emergency Directive 006 ("Directive 006 [http://gov.nv.gov/News/Emergency_Orders/2020/2020-03-22 - COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency Directive 006/](http://gov.nv.gov/News/Emergency_Orders/2020/2020-03-22_-_COVID-19_Declaration_of_Emergency_Directive_006/) and will be held by teleconference only.
2. The announcement of this meeting has been electronically posted in compliance with NRS 241.020(3) and Directive 006 at <http://www.tmwa.com>, and NRS 232.2175 at <https://notice.nv.gov/>.
3. Pursuant to Directive 006, the requirement contained in NRS 241.020(3)(c) that physical locations be available for the public to receive supporting material for public meetings has been suspended. Staff reports and supporting material for the meeting are available on the TMWA website at <http://www.tmwa.com/meeting/> or you can contact Sonia Folsom at (775) 834-8002. Supporting material is made available to the general public in accordance with NRS 241.020(6).
4. The Board may elect to combine agenda items, consider agenda items out of order, remove agenda items, or delay discussion on agenda items. Arrive at the meeting at the posted time to hear item(s) of interest.
5. Asterisks (*) denote non-action items.
6. Pursuant to Directive 006, public comment, whether on action items or general public comment, may be provided without being physically present at the meeting by submitting written comments online on TMWA's Public Comment Form (tmwa.com/PublicComment) or by email sent to boardclerk@tmwa.com prior to the Board opening the public comment period during the meeting. In addition, public comments may be provided by leaving a voicemail at (775)834-0255 prior to 4:00 p.m. the day before the scheduled meeting. Voicemail messages received will be noted during the meeting and summarized for entry into the record. Public comment is limited to three minutes and is allowed during the public comment periods. The Board may elect to receive public comment only during the two public comment periods rather than each action item. Due to constraints of TMWA's videoconference system, public comment must be provided by voicemail, email or online comment as indicated above.
7. In the event the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are absent, the remaining Board members may elect a temporary presiding officer to preside over the meeting until the Chairman or Vice-Chairman are present (**Standing Item of Possible Action**).
8. Notice of possible quorum of Western Regional Water Commission: Because several members of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority Board of Directors are also Trustees of the Western Regional Water Commission, it is possible that a quorum of the Western Regional Water Commission may be present, however, such members will not deliberate or take action at this meeting in their capacity as Trustees of the Western Regional Water Commission.

¹The Board may adjourn from the public meeting at any time during the agenda to receive information and conduct labor-oriented discussions in accordance with NRS 288.220 or receive information from legal counsel regarding potential or existing litigation and to deliberate toward a decision on such matters related to litigation or potential litigation.

1. Roll call*
2. Pledge of allegiance*
3. Welcome New Board Member — Chair Hartung*
4. Public comment — limited to no more than three minutes per speaker*
5. Possible Board comments or acknowledgements*
6. Approval of the agenda (**For Possible Action**)
7. Approval of the minutes of the December 16, 2020 meeting of the TMWA Board of Directors (**For Possible Action**)
8. Water Supply Update — Bill Hauck*
9. Appointment of Trustee to the Western Regional Water Commission (WRWC) pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons to fill the remaining term ending March 31, 2021 vacated by Member Jeanne Herman: Alexis Hill — John Zimmerman (**For Possible Action**)
10. Discussion and action on nomination and appointments of Trustee(s) to the Western Regional Water Commission (WRWC) from the TMWA Board of Directors for the following positions to fill vacancies ending March 31, 2021 and for new two year terms from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023:
 - A) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(a) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Jenny Brekhus and Neoma Jardon.
 - B) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(b) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Paul Anderson.
 - C) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Alexis Hill.
 - D) Pursuant to Sec. 25(4) of the WRWC Act representing TMWA as successor to South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District from the following list of qualified persons: Jenny Brekhus, Oscar Delgado, Neoma Jardon, Devon Reese, Hillary Schieve, Jeanne Herman, Bob Lucey, Kitty Jung, Charlene Bybee, and Ed Lawson.— John Zimmerman (**For Possible Action**)
11. Update on 2020 Interim Session and discussion and action on establishing a Legislative Subcommittee for the 2021 Legislative Session and appointment of Board members to Subcommittee — John Zimmerman (**For Possible Action**)
12. Informational presentation on management of TMWA's water resources, cooperation and integration of regional water resource management and potential future development of additional water supplies — John Enloe and John Zimmerman*

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13. Discussion and informational presentation in response to Board member inquiries regarding suspension of water service for water waste on private laterals and landlord authority to impose water service surcharge on tenant rent bills and possible direction to staff — John Zimmerman (**For Possible Action**)
14. General Manager's Report*
15. Public comment — limited to no more than three minutes per speaker*
16. Board comments and requests for future agenda items*
17. Adjournment (**For Possible Action**)

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TRUCKEE MEADOWS WATER AUTHORITY
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 16, 2020
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors met on Wednesday, December 16, 2020, via Zoom Virtual Meeting, Reno, Nevada. Chair Hartung called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Paul Anderson, Jenny Brekhus, Kristopher Dahir, Naomi Duerr, Neoma Jardon, Vaughn Hartung, and Jeanne Herman.

A quorum was present by telephonic appearance.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Member Jardon.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. POSSIBLE BOARD COMMENTS OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

Chair Hartung congratulated Mr. Chris Wessel for being approved as the next program manager to the Western Regional Water Commission (WRWC).

5. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon motion by Member Duerr second by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the agenda.

6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 21, 2020 MEETING

Upon motion by Member Jardon, second by Member Hartung, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the October 21, 2020 minutes.

7. WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

Bill Hauck, TMWA Water Supply Administrator, informed the Board that the series of storms recently increased snowpack by about 20 percent and at least a foot of new snow; the snowpack is about 75 percent of normal in the Truckee Basin, which is close to normal for this time of year; the remaining winter months could add more snowpack; and TMWA has about 35,000 acre feet in upstream storage, which positively positions TMWA in the event of a dry winter, and for at least two years.

Chair Hartung requested a presentation by the National Weather Service similar to what was presented to the Truckee Meadows Fire and Rescue Board of Directors.

8. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. 289: A RESOLUTION APPROVING TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF 0.16 ACRES OF SURPLUS LAND NEAR TMWA DOUBLE DIAMOND WELL NO. 2 TO NEIGHBORING PROPERTY OWNER FOR NO CONSIDERATION

Heather Edmunson, TMWA Land Agent, informed the Board TMWA was gifted a piece of property adjacent to the Double Diamond Well No. 2 site, which will be subdivided where TMWA will retain the northerly portion of the parcel to grant access and easement to increase the lot size for future expansion and maintenance. The General Manager has certified that the southern portion is not necessary for efficient operation of the water system and may be transferred to the adjacent property owner as surplus property upon resolution by the Board that it is too small to establish an economically viable use.

Upon motion by Member Brekhus second by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board adopted Resolution No. 289: A resolution approving transfer of ownership of 0.16 acres of surplus land near TMWA Double Diamond Well No. 2 to neighboring property owner for no consideration.

9. DISCUSSION AND ACTION CONFIRMING GENERAL MANAGER'S APPOINTMENT OF FOUR TRUSTEES TO THE §115 POST-RETIREMENT MEDICAL PLAN & TRUST FOR A TWO-YEAR TERM FROM JANUARY 1, 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022

Upon motion by Member Duerr second by Member Brekhus, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved General Manager's appointment of four trustees (Michele Sullivan, Sandra Tozi, Charles Atkinson and Randy Van Hoozer) to the §115 Post-Retirement Medical Plan & Trust for a two-year term from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022.

10. DISCUSSION AND ACTION CONFIRMING GENERAL MANAGER'S APPOINTMENT OF FOUR TRUSTEES TO THE §501-C-9 POST-RETIREMENT MEDICAL PLAN & TRUST FOR A TWO-YEAR TERM FROM JANUARY 1, 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022

Upon motion by Member Duerr second by Member Brekhus, which motion duly carried by six to zero of the members voting, the Board approved the General Manager's appointment of four Trustees (Michele Sullivan, Juan Esparza, James Weingart and Steve Enos) to the §501-c-9 Post-Retirement Medical Plan & Trust for a two-year term from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022. (Member Anderson, who participated telephonically, did not indicate a vote on the item)

11. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. 290: A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (CAFR) FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020

Matt Bowman, TMWA Financial Controller, acknowledged Sophie Cardinal, TMWA Principal Accountant, who facilitated the majority of the audit with Eide Bailly. Mr. Bowman presented the updated, online user-friendly, CAFR, with included various audit reports from Eide Bailly with no audit findings.

Upon motion by Member Brekhus second by Member Jardon, which motion duly carried by six to zero of the members voting, the Board adopted Resolution No. 290: A resolution to approve the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2020. (Member Herman, who participated telephonically, did not indicate a vote on the item)

12 PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR FIRST QUARTER FISCAL YEAR 2021

Mr. Bowman stated TMWA saw higher water usage, about 6% over budget in water sales, in the first quarter; operating expenses were \$1.6m lower than budget; non-operating expenses were higher than budget due primarily to lower investment income (\$2.8m compared to \$2.1m in the budget); capital contributions were slightly higher than budgeted by \$0.7m; and cash position is \$3.2m higher than at the beginning of the fiscal year at \$209.0m, and TMWA made its first principal payment of \$10.5m (principal payments were deferred in TMWA's 2016 Refunding Bonds) on its senior lien debt.

13. DISCUSSION AND ACTION, AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION TO STAFF REGARDING APPOINTMENTS TO THE STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO FILL VACANCIES IN EXISTING POSITIONS WHOSE TERMS EXPIRE DECEMBER 31, 2020, SUCH APPOINTMENTS TO BE MADE FOR NEW TERMS FROM JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022 FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF CANDIDATES: (1) NEIL MCGUIRE, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, IRRIGATION CUSTOMER; (2) KARL KATT, ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE, IRRIGATION CUSTOMER; (3) DONALD KOWITZ, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, COMMERCIAL CUSTOMER; (4) ROBERT CHAMBERS, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, SENIOR CUSTOMER; (5) KEN MCNEIL, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, AT-LARGE 1 CUSTOMER; (6) KEN BECKER, ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE, AT-LARGE 1 CUSTOMER; (7) JORDAN HASTINGS, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, AT-LARGE 2 CUSTOMERS; (8) CAROL LITSTER, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, REPRESENTATIVE 1 CUSTOMER; (9) DALE SANDERSON, ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE, REPRESENTATIVE 2 CUSTOMERS; (10) HARRY CULBERT, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, REPRESENTATIVE 2 CUSTOMER; (11) FRED ARNDT, ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE, REPRESENTATIVE 2 CUSTOMERS; AND (12) JERRY WAGER, PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE, REPRESENTATIVE 3 CUSTOMER

Sonia Folsom, TMWA Standing Advisory Committee Liaison, presented the staff report.

The Board discussed bringing back an item to discuss the composition of the Committee at a future meeting to address the increase in multi-family units in the region, many of which are in the Cities of Sparks and Reno, as well as expanding the parameters in the recruitment (to include tenants) to fill the Multi-Family Primary Customer Representative position.

Upon motion by Member Duerr, second by Member Herman, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved appointments to the Standing Advisory Committee to fill vacancies in existing positions whose terms expire December 31, 2020, such appointments to be made for new terms from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022 from the following list of candidates: (1) Neil McGuire, primary representative, irrigation customer; (2) Karl Katt, alternate representative, irrigation customer; (3) Donald Kowitz, primary representative, commercial customer; (4) Robert Chambers, primary representative, senior customer; (5) Ken McNeil, primary representative, at-large 1 customer; (6) Ken Becker, alternate representative, at-large 1 customer; (7) Jordan Hastings, primary representative, at-large 2 customers; (8) Carol Litster, primary representative, representative 1 customer; (9) Dale Sanderson, alternate representative, representative 2 customers; (10) Harry Culbert, primary representative, representative 2 customer; (11) Fred Arndt, alternate

representative, representative 2 customers; and (12) Jerry Wager, primary representative, representative 3 customer.

Upon motion by Member Duerr, second by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to advertise for the Multi-Family Primary Customer Representative position, and to bring back candidates and discussion of composition and possible modification of multi-family position at future board meeting.

14. PRESENTATION OF TRUCKEE RIVER FUND ACTIVITIES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020

Ms. Folsom informed the Board of the projects the Truckee River Fund (the Fund) approved in calendar year 2020. Since 2005, the Fund has approved 181 projects, awarded \$14.1m, with a total match of \$23.2m in cash and in-kind services.

15. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON SCHEDULING REGULAR BOARD MEETING DATES AND TIMES FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2021

Ms. Folsom presented the proposed Board meeting schedule for calendar year 2021.

The Board discussed moving the meeting dates that conflicted with City of Reno Council meetings to the third Thursday in July and November.

Upon motion by Member Duerr, second by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the proposed dates and times for the Calendar Year 2021 and amended dates for July and November.

16. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Foree reported to the Board the south gate at Hunter Creek Reservoir has been opened granting access to the public on a trial basis and if there are no issues, it will remain open. He thanked the Board and staff for another great year, especially considering the difficult times due to the pandemic; staff continues to exceed expectations.

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

18. BOARD COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Member Brekhus requested an agenda item to discuss landlord surcharges on water billing (charged in monthly rent) to multi-family residents.

Vice Chair Dahir requested an update on the digital plan review process.

Member Duerr requested an item be added at a future meeting to discuss composition of the Standing Advisory Committee.

Member Duerr requested an item be added at a future meeting to discuss authorizing TMWA to turn off water service where water waste occurs in private lateral.

19. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Chair Hartung adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

Approved by the TMWA Board of Directors in session on _____.

Sonia Folsom, Board Clerk.



Northern Nevada Water Supply Outlook

TMWA Board of Directors Meeting

Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator

January 20, 2021



W WEST NW
B I-80 AT KINGVALE



U.S. Drought Monitor West

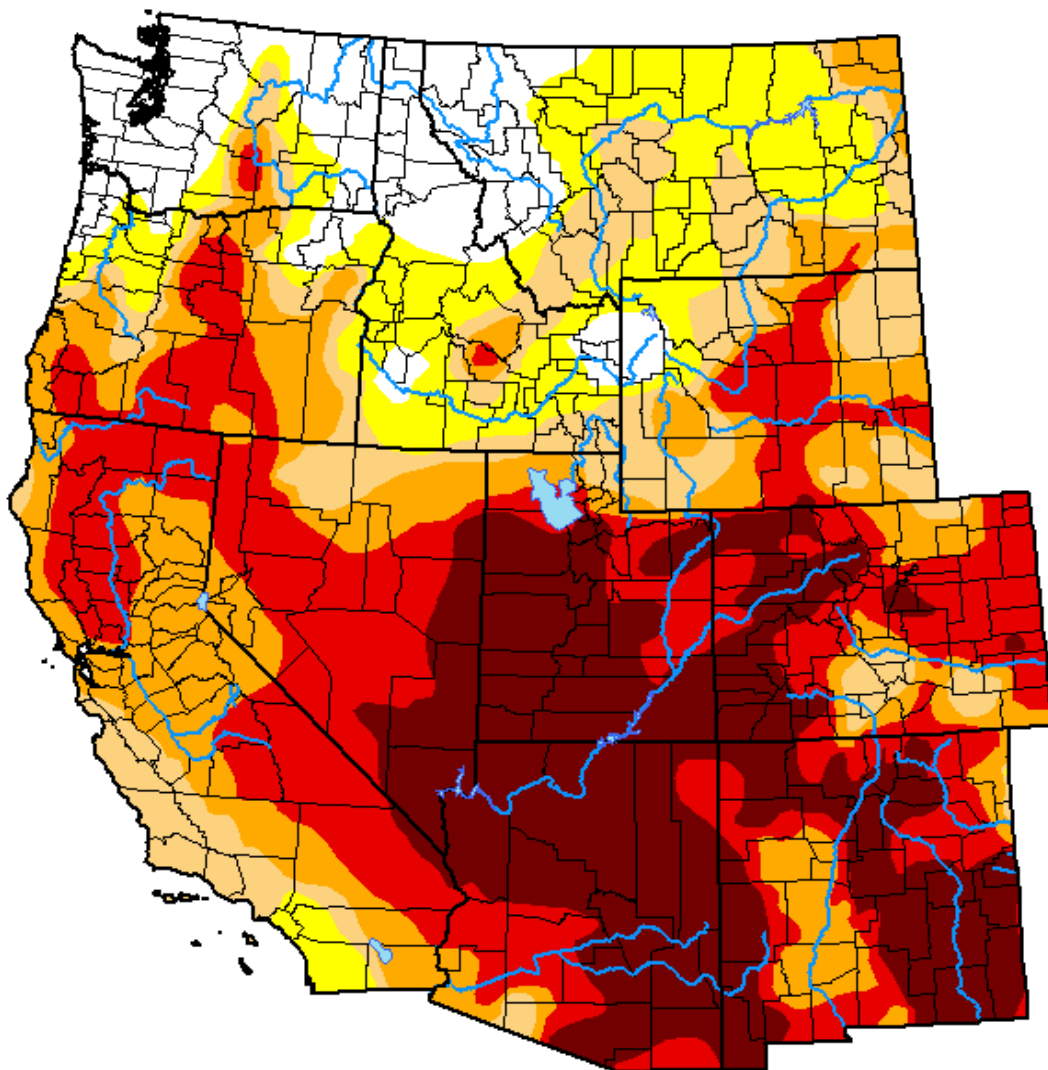
January 12, 2021

(Released Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021)

Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	9.74	90.26	77.81	64.84	46.84	22.14
Last Week <i>01-05-2021</i>	11.89	88.11	78.01	64.59	46.50	22.16
3 Months Ago <i>10-13-2020</i>	6.84	93.16	80.13	58.02	37.23	4.50
Start of Calendar Year <i>12-29-2020</i>	11.57	88.43	78.63	65.18	46.49	22.16
Start of Water Year <i>09-29-2020</i>	8.51	91.49	76.07	54.55	33.11	2.31
One Year Ago <i>01-14-2020</i>	60.01	39.99	17.22	4.99	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

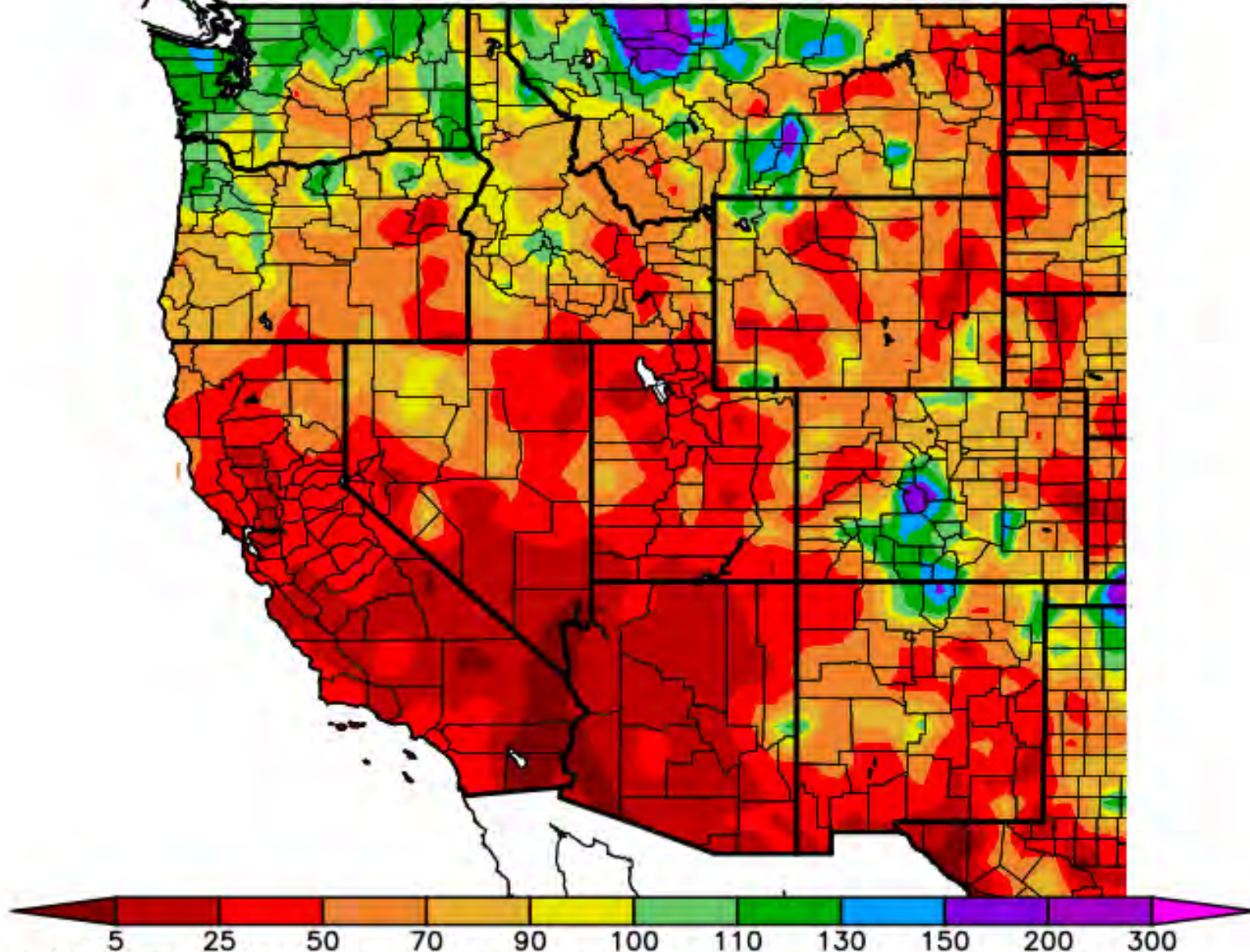
Author:

Deborah Bathke
National Drought Mitigation Center

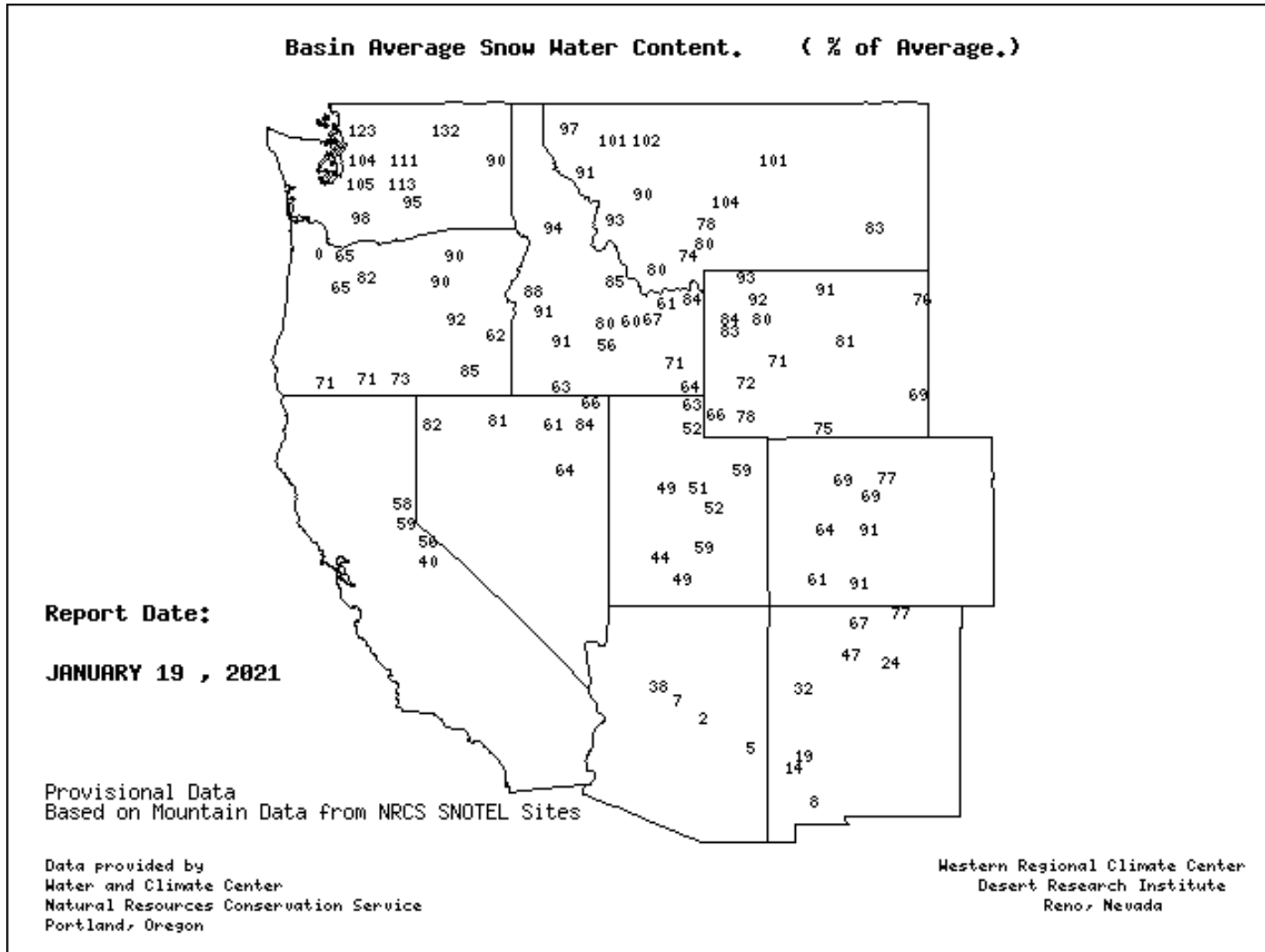


Percent of Average Precipitation (%)

10/21/2020 – 1/18/2021



NRCS SNOTEL Data (01/20/2021)



Truckee Basin Snowpack (01/20/2021)

SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN TRUCKEE

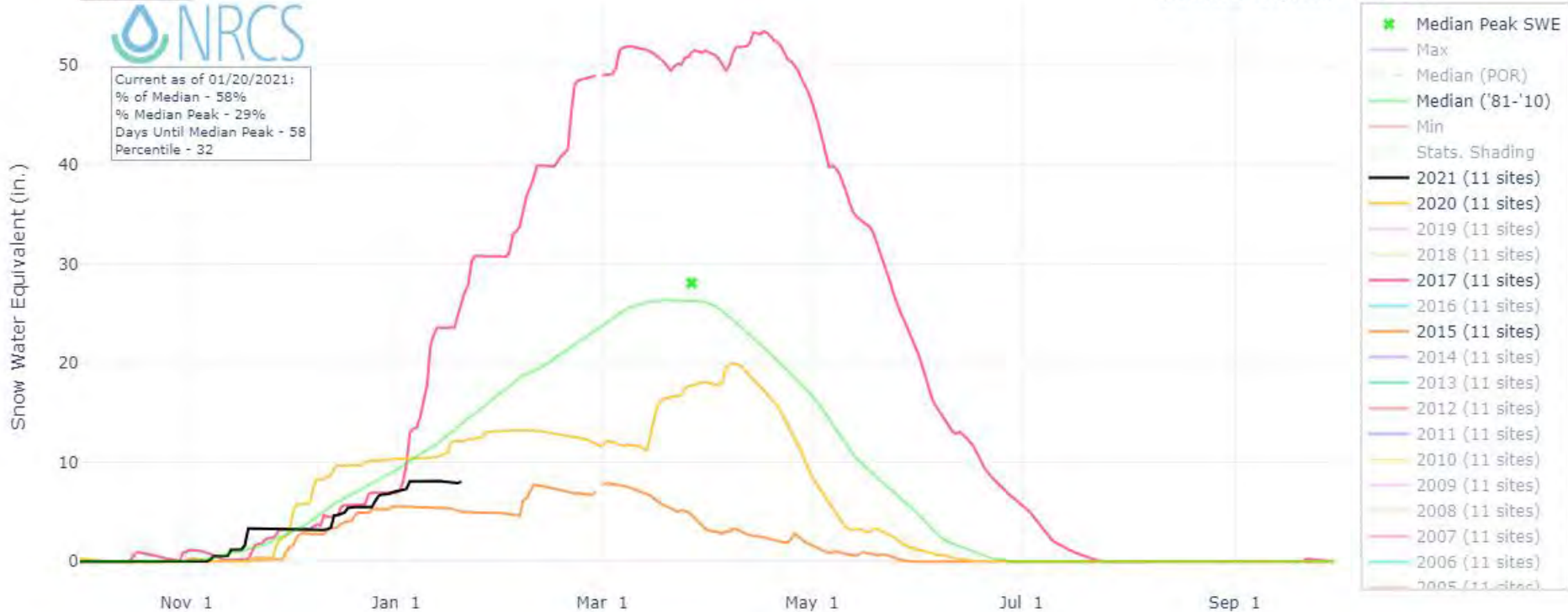
Reset Range



Current as of 01/20/2021:
 % of Median - 58%
 % Median Peak - 29%
 Days Until Median Peak - 58
 Percentile - 32

Link to data: CSV / JSON

Station List



Statistical shading breaks at 10th, 30th, 50th, 70th, and 90th Percentiles.
 For more information visit: 30 year normals calculation description.

Lake Tahoe Basin Snowpack (01/20/2021)

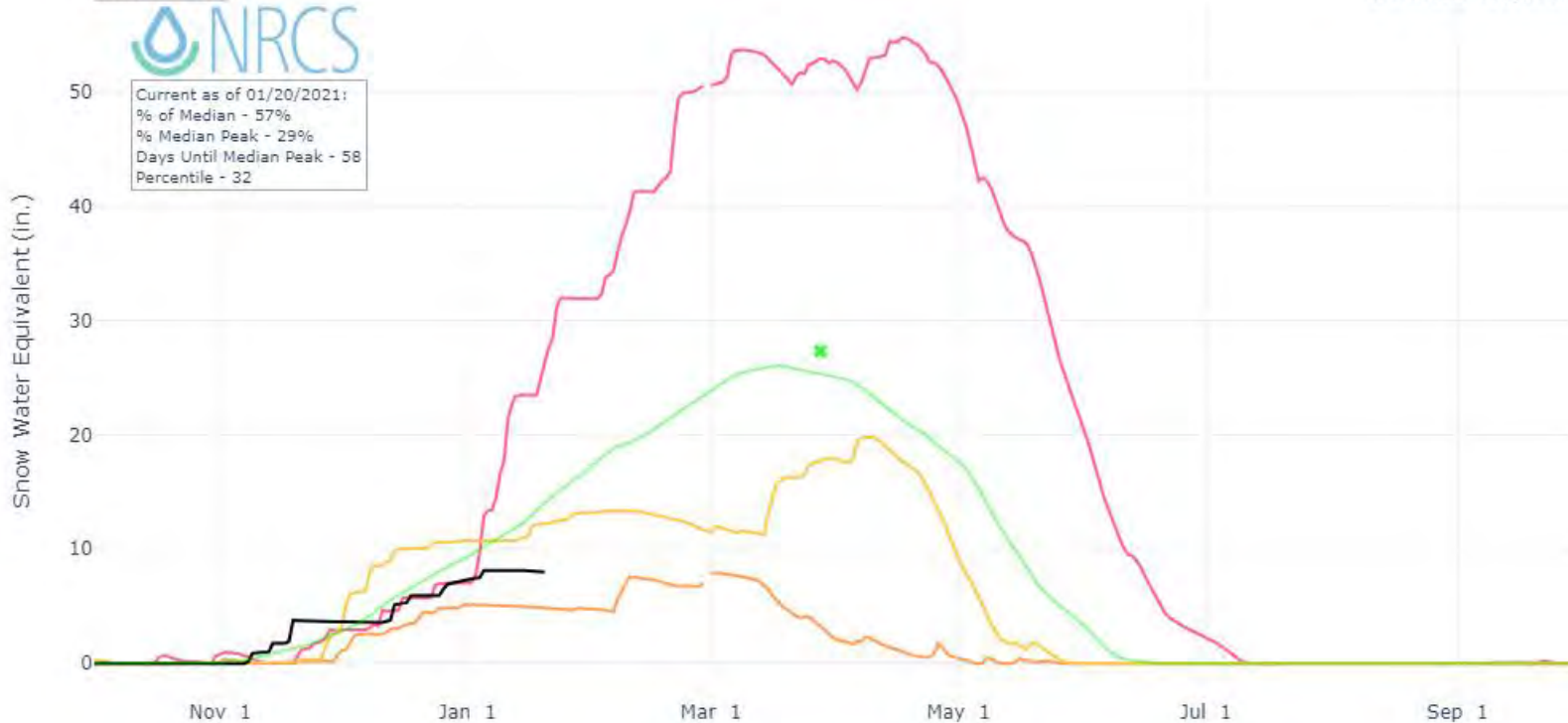
SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN LAKE TAHOE

Reset Range

Link to data: CSV / JSON

Station List

- ★ Median Peak SWE
- Max
- Median (PDR)
- Median ('81-'10)
- Min
- Stats. Shading
- 2021 (11 sites)
- 2020 (11 sites)
- 2019 (11 sites)
- 2018 (11 sites)
- 2017 (11 sites)
- 2016 (11 sites)
- 2015 (11 sites)
- 2014 (11 sites)
- 2013 (11 sites)
- 2012 (11 sites)
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- 2007 (11 sites)
- 2006 (11 sites)
- 2005 (11 sites)

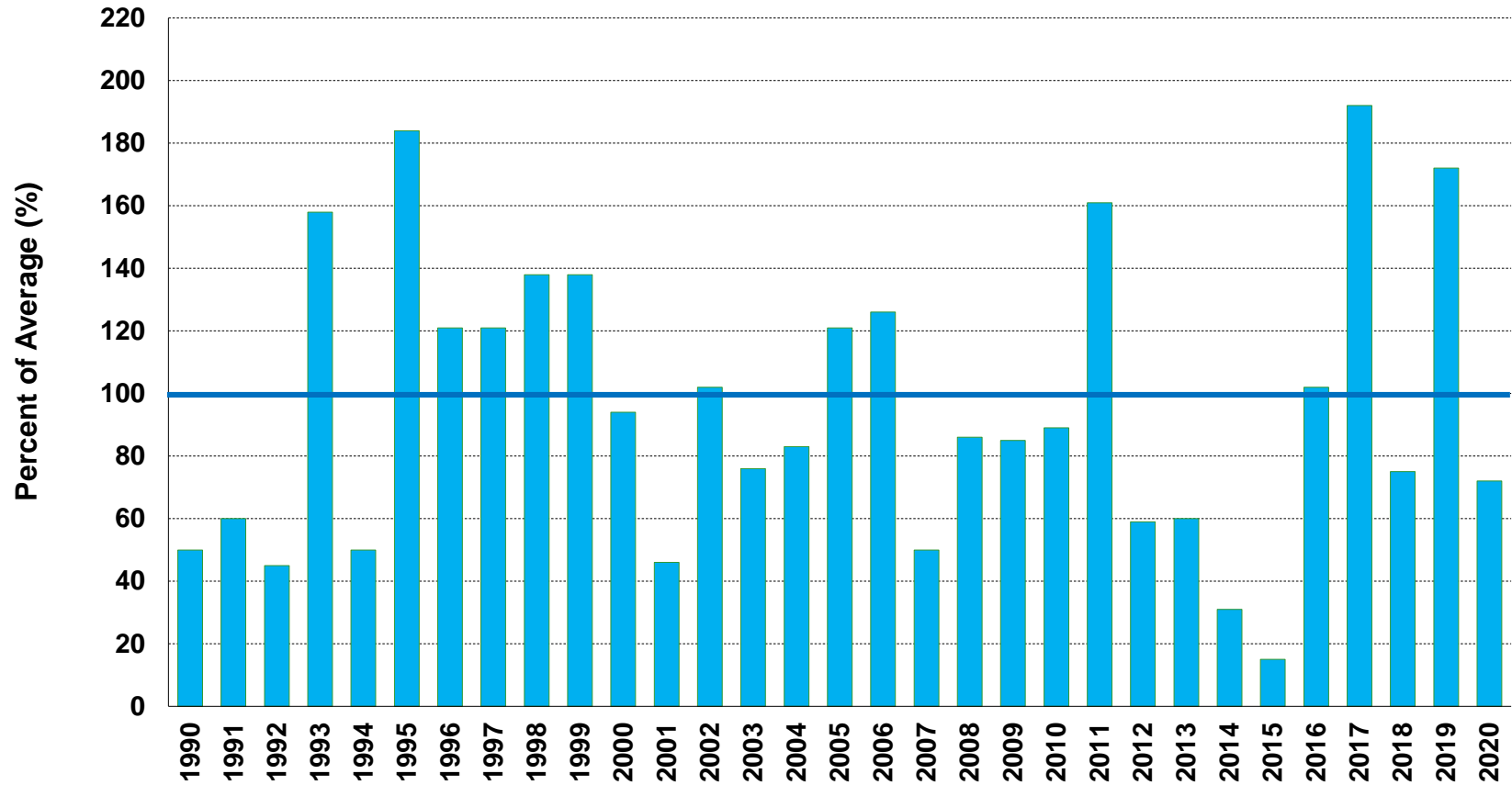


Current as of 01/20/2021:
 % of Median - 57%
 % Median Peak - 29%
 Days Until Median Peak - 58
 Percentile - 32

Statistical shading breaks at 10th, 30th, 50th, 70th, and 90th Percentiles.
 For more information visit: 30 year normals calculation description.



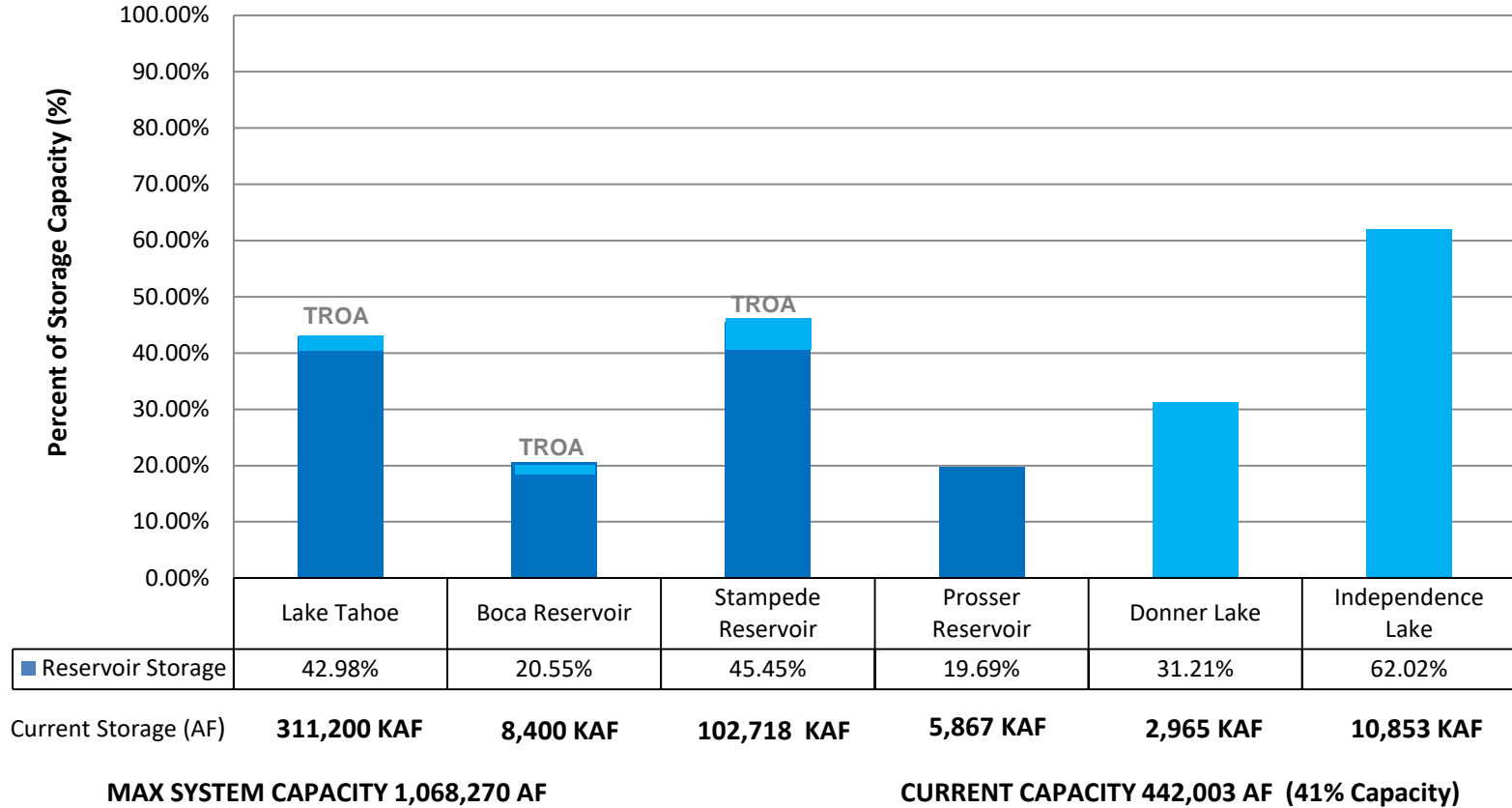
April 1 Truckee River Basin Snowpack (last 30 years)



Truckee River System

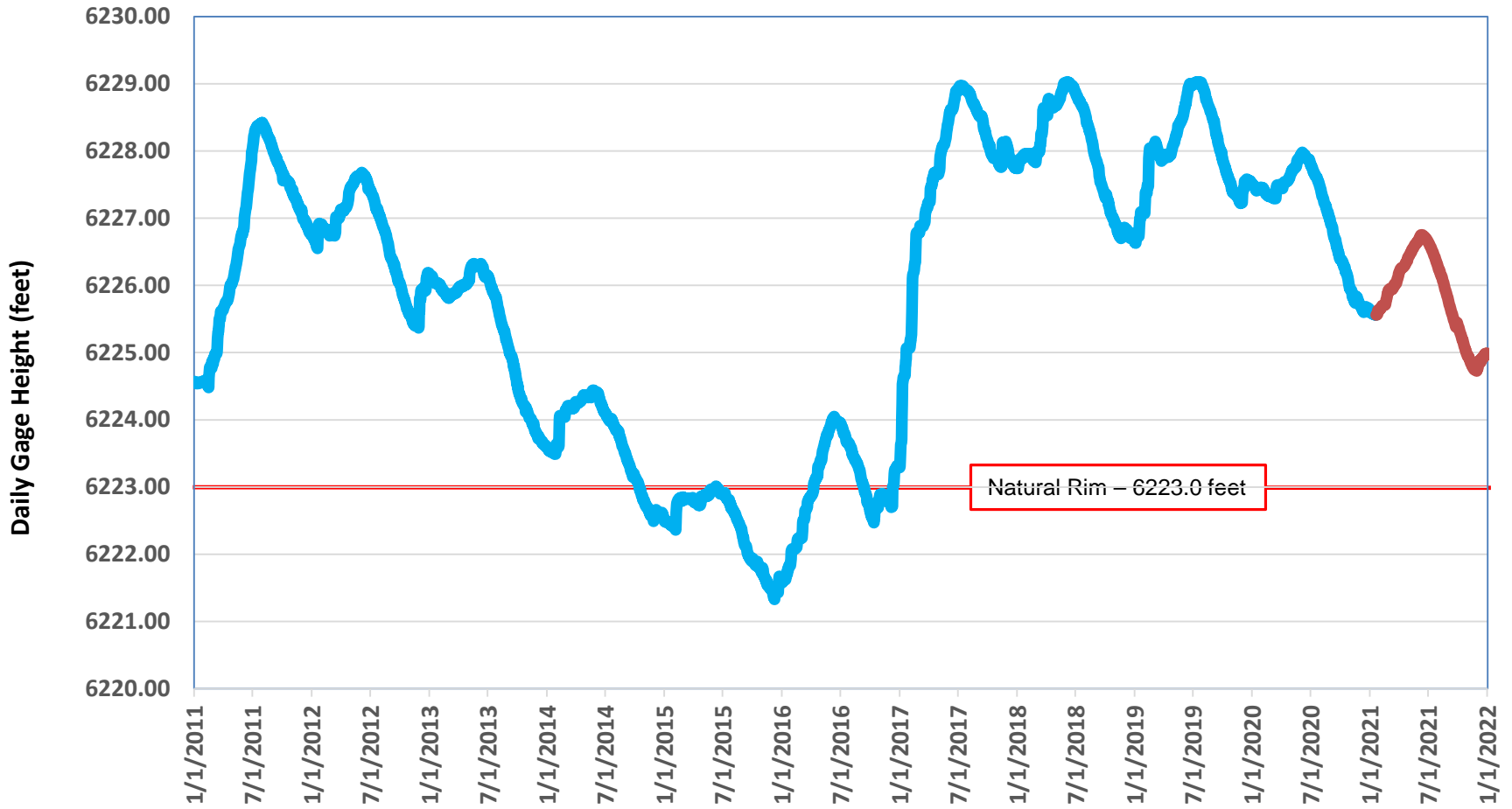


Truckee River System Storage (01/20/2021)

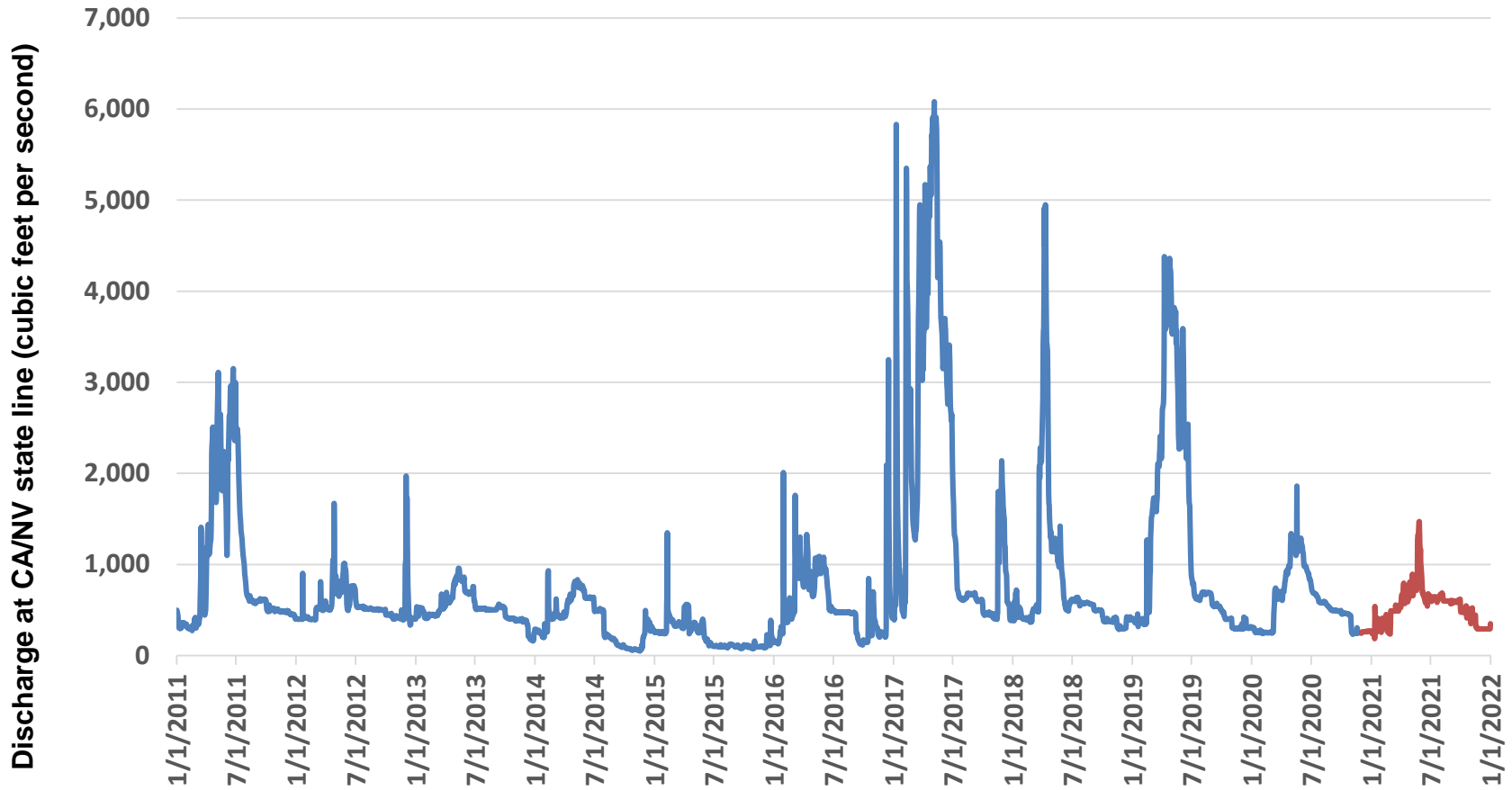




Actual and Projected Lake Tahoe Elevation through 2021



Actual and Projected Truckee River Flow through 2021





Thank you!

Questions?

Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator

Email: bhauck@tmwa.com

O: (775) 834-8111 M: (775) 250-1333



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Mark Foree, General Manager
DATE: January 13, 2021
SUBJECT: **Appointment of Trustee to the Western Regional Water Commission (WRWC) pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons to fill the remaining term ending March 31, 2021 vacated by Member Jeanne Herman: Alexis Hill**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the TMWA Board appoint a member to the Western Regional Water Commission to serve the remaining term ending March 31, 2021 vacated by Member Jeanne Herman:

1. One TMWA Board member who is a member of the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners.

DISCUSSION

During the 2007 legislative session, SB487 was enacted to create the Western Regional Water Commission (effective date April 1, 2008), a governing board to oversee water resources planning and management in Washoe County. The Western Regional Water Commission Act, Chapter 531, Statutes of Nevada, Section 25, provides for appointments to the Board of Trustees as follows:

Sec. 25. 3. The Board of Directors of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority or its successor shall appoint from its membership, for initial terms of 3 years:

- (a) One trustee who is a member of the City Council of the City of Reno;
- (b) One trustee who is a member of the City Council of the City of Sparks; and
- (c) One trustee who is a member of the Board of County Commissioners of Washoe County.

➡ The trustees appointed pursuant to this subsection must be different persons than those appointed pursuant to subsection 2.

4. The Board of Trustees of the Sun Valley General Improvement District or its successor and the Board of Trustees of the South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District or its successor shall each appoint one trustee for an initial term of 3 years.

5. The owners of the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility or its successor shall jointly appoint one trustee for an initial term of 2 years.

6. After the initial terms, each trustee who is appointed to the Board serves for a term of 2 years. A trustee may be reappointed.

7. All trustees must be elected officials. No trustee may serve beyond his term of office.
8. The position of a trustee must be considered vacated upon his loss of any of the qualifications required for his appointment, and in such event, the appointing authority shall appoint a successor to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.

The current appointees to the Western Regional Water Commission Board are as follows:

Appointing Body	Trustee
City of Reno	Councilmember Naomi Duerr
City of Sparks	Councilmember Kristopher Dahir
Washoe County	Commissioner Vaughn Hartung
TMWA (Section 3 - from TMWA Board):	Councilmember Paul Anderson (Sparks)
	Councilmember Jenny Brekhus (Reno)
	<i>Vacant</i> (Washoe County)
Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility	Councilmember Bonnie Weber (Reno)
Sun Valley General Improvement District	SVGID Trustee Sandra Ainsworth
TMWA (Section 4 – as successor to STMGID)	Commissioner Bob Lucey (Washoe County)



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Mark Foree, General Manager
DATE: January 13, 2021
SUBJECT: Discussion and action on nomination and appointments of Trustee(s) to the Western Regional Water Commission (WRWC) from the TMWA Board of Directors for the following positions to fill vacancies ending March 31, 2021 and for new two year terms from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023:

A) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(a) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Jenny Brekhus and Neoma Jardon.

B) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(b) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Paul Anderson.

C) Pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act from the following list of qualified persons: Alexis Hill.

D) Pursuant to Sec. 25(4) of the WRWC Act representing TMWA as successor to South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District from the following list of qualified persons: Jenny Brekhus, Oscar Delgado, Neoma Jardon, Devon Reese, Hillary Schieve, Jeanne Herman, Bob Lucey, Kitty Jung, Charlene Bybee, and Ed Lawson.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the TMWA Board appoint four members to the Western Regional Water Commission to serve a two-year term commencing April 1, 2021 to include:

1. One TMWA Board member who is a member of the Reno City Council
2. One TMWA Board member who is a member of the Sparks City Council
3. One TMWA Board member who is a member of the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners
4. One member designated by the TMWA Board as South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District (STMGID) successor

DISCUSSION

During the 2007 legislative session, SB487 was enacted to create the Western Regional Water Commission (effective date April 1, 2008), a governing board to oversee water resources planning and management in Washoe County. The Western Regional Water Commission Act, Chapter 531, Statutes of Nevada, Section 25, provides for appointments to the Board of Trustees as follows:

Sec. 25. 1. The Regional Water Commission must be directed and governed by a Board of Trustees composed of the following nine members appointed pursuant to this section:

- (a) Two members of the City Council of the City of Reno;
- (b) Two members of the City Council of the City of Sparks;
- (c) Two members of the Board of County Commissioners of Washoe County;
- (d) One member representing the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility or its successor;
- (e) One member designated by the Board of Trustees of the South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District or its successor; and
- (f) One member of the Board of Trustees of the Sun Valley General Improvement District or its successor.

2. The City Council of the City of Reno, the City Council of the City of Sparks and the Board of County Commissioners of Washoe County shall each appoint one trustee from their membership for an initial term of 2 years.

3. The Board of Directors of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority or its successor shall appoint from its membership, for initial terms of 3 years:

- (a) One trustee who is a member of the City Council of the City of Reno;
- (b) One trustee who is a member of the City Council of the City of Sparks; and
- (c) One trustee who is a member of the Board of County Commissioners of Washoe County.

➔ The trustees appointed pursuant to this subsection must be different persons than those appointed pursuant to subsection 2.

4. The Board of Trustees of the Sun Valley General Improvement District or its successor and the Board of Trustees of the South Truckee Meadows General Improvement District or its successor shall each appoint one trustee for an initial term of 3 years.

5. The owners of the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility or its successor shall jointly appoint one trustee for an initial term of 2 years.

6. After the initial terms, each trustee who is appointed to the Board serves for a term of 2 years. A trustee may be reappointed.

7. All trustees must be elected officials. No trustee may serve beyond his term of office.

8. The position of a trustee must be considered vacated upon his loss of any of the qualifications required for his appointment, and in such event, the appointing authority shall appoint a successor to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.

The current appointees to the Western Regional Water Commission Board are as follows:

Appointing Body	Trustee
City of Reno	Councilmember Naomi Duerr
City of Sparks	Councilmember Kristopher Dahir
Washoe County	Commissioner Vaughn Hartung
TMWA (Section 3 - from TMWA Board):	Councilmember Paul Anderson (Sparks)
	Councilmember Jenny Brekhus (Reno)
	Commissioner Alexis Hill (Washoe County)
Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility	Councilmember Bonnie Weber (Reno)
Sun Valley General Improvement District	SVGID Trustee Sandra Ainsworth
TMWA (Section 4 – as successor to STMGID)	Commissioner Bob Lucey (Washoe County)



STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Board Members
THRU: Mark Foree, General Manager
FROM: John Zimmerman, Manager, Water Resources
DATE: January 11, 2021
SUBJECT: **Update on 2020 Interim Session and discussion and action on establishing a Legislative Subcommittee for the 2021 Legislative Session and appointment of Board members to Subcommittee**

SUMMARY

This agenda item has two sections. The first is an update on TMWA's legislative activities during the 2020 interim session. The second is a request to form a 3-member TMWA legislative subcommittee for the upcoming 2021 regular session.

1. Interim Session

After the 2019 regular session, the Board directed staff to take a more active role with the legislature and governmental affairs in general. The Board also created a subcommittee for the interim session consisting of Chair Hartung, Vice-Chair Dahir, and Member Duerr. Staff and TMWA lobbyist Leo Drozdoff have taken a more active role with the legislature by meeting with more legislators and presenting to state regulators.

Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, TMWA was able to meet with Assemblywoman Sarah Peters and Senators Ben Kieckhefer and Julia Ratti. TMWA Vice Chair Kristopher Dahir was able to participate in the meeting with Senator Ratti and Chair Hartung was able to participate in the meeting with Senator Kieckhefer. Senator Ratti is chair of the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Water System. Senator Kieckhefer and Assemblywoman Peters are also members of that Committee and Senator Ratti has directed Senator Kieckhefer to take the lead on steering the business of the Committee.

During our individual meetings, TMWA staff and Mr. Drozdoff provided the legislators with a very high-level overview of TMWA's operations. We also briefed the legislators on TMWA's priorities and specifically described TMWA's involvement and interest in working with the Nevada Department of Administration to maximize the beneficial use of water from the Marlette Lake water system, which includes Marlette

Lake and the Hobart-East Slope water resources. We received very positive feedback from the legislators and all of them wanted to be helpful regarding TMWA's Marlette Water System involvement. Additionally, Mr. Drozdoff assisted TMWA with engaging Carson City in the discussion and we have entered into a memorandum of understanding that contemplates TMWA, Carson City, and Storey County (on behalf of Virginia City) collaborating on a plan to maximize the beneficial use of these water resources in a manner that works for both parties and the state. Also prior to the shutdown, Mr. Drozdoff met with Senator Chris Brooks to discuss TMWA's climate change analysis.

Discussions with State Regulators

On the policy maker side, we have kept a continuing dialogue going with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), State Engineer's Office, and Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). We met with the Director of DCNR and several high-level members of his leadership team, including the State Engineer, NDEP administrator and deputy administrator, and Nevada Climate Policy Coordinator. This meeting was very productive and the Director and his leadership team appreciated the information and TMWA's approach to water resource management and long-term planning.

As the Board will recall, in the last regular session, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 62 that requires the State Engineer to develop regulations regarding the amount of time and evidence required to prove that a water right owner is proceeding in good faith with reasonable diligence to perfect a water right. The initial draft of the proposed regulations required by AB 62 were made public in June and the State Engineer held a public workshop to obtain input on them. TMWA provided written and verbal comments at the hearing, which supported the State Engineer's goals, but disagreed with the language being proposed to accomplish those goals. Many other stakeholders echoed TMWA's comments, including SNWA and other municipal water purveyors. Almost all public comments were opposed to the proposed regulations. The State Engineer has since revised the proposed regulations, which are a substantial improvement from the initial version. The State Engineer held a workshop on the revised draft regulations on January 13th. TMWA is preparing written comments that are due February 12th. TMWA's main concern is that the proposed revisions will increase staff time and administrative cost in preparing applications for extensions of time.

Regarding Assembly Bill 30, which involved "3M" plans, but failed to pass, the Director of DCNR has previously told TMWA that his office would not pursue any legislative or regulatory changes regarding AB 30 topics until they finished the AB 62 regulations. Staff and Mr. Drozdoff will continue to be actively engaged in the process.

2. 2021 Regular Session

The 2021 legislative session will begin on February 1st. The session is likely to be dominated by the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are, however, numerous bills involving topics TMWA closely monitors including: water rights, collective bargaining, government purchasing and public works, public records, renewable energy, and labor and employment policy.

TMWA is closely monitoring the selection of chairs for the Senate and Assembly committees on natural resources. Assemblyman Howard Watts has been appointed as the chair of the Assembly's Natural Resources Committee and Senator Cancela was appointed chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. On January 11th, however, Senator Cancela resigned her position in the Nevada State Senate to take a position with the Biden Administration. We believe that the Chair of Natural Resources will be either Senator Roberta Lange or the yet to be appointed replacement. We are monitoring the developments in Clark County on this front. Mr. Drozdoff is currently reaching out to Senator Watts on a policy issue and will discuss a TMWA meeting with him. We will schedule an appropriate meeting on the Senate side when we are able to do so.

There are several proposed water bills from the DCNR and the State Engineer this session. TMWA has participated in several stakeholder meetings with DCNR and the State Engineer regarding these bills, with the most-recent meeting scheduled for January 14th. TMWA has provided initial feedback to the agency and has been speaking with other water purveyors as well other stakeholders. We will continue to do so up to and during the early part of the session and will brief the TMWA legislative subcommittee on the specifics of the proposed legislation at the first subcommittee meeting and the Board at the February meeting.

The timing of TMWA Board meetings may not coincide with legislative activities that may affect TMWA's interests. To monitor the session, the Board since 2007 has formed a 3-member subcommittee consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and another Board member. Subcommittee meetings are open to the public and usually scheduled for every Friday of the session unless they are canceled due to lack of items to discuss or act on. Subcommittee members, staff, and TMWA lobbyists attend the meetings to discuss positions on various bills, which allow the subcommittee to direct staff and lobbyists if any action is needed.¹

Also, beginning February 2021, a standing item on legislative matters will become part of the Board's monthly agenda. At these meetings, staff and TMWA lobbyists will provide the Board with a table summarizing the status of Senate and Assembly bills,

¹ In the past, the Western Regional Water Commission also formed a legislative subcommittee and held joint meetings with TMWA's subcommittee.

along with positions the subcommittee and Board have taken on each bill. TMWA lobbyists will attend the Board meetings to answer questions and provide insight into the legislative intent of particular bills. At times during the session, requests are made to have TMWA attend meetings with legislators or others. In those cases, TMWA staff and lobbyists will communicate with, and receive direction from, the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman if the Chairman is unavailable) regarding the request.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to Board modification, staff recommends the same procedure and process be implemented for the 2021 session and that the Board appoint 3 members to the TMWA legislative subcommittee and an alternate to step in when a subcommittee member is unavailable or has a scheduling conflict.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: John Enloe, Director of Natural Resource
John Zimmerman, Manager of Water Resources
Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator & Conservation Supervisor
Kara Steeland, Hydrologist
DATE: January 11, 2021
SUBJECT: **Informational presentation on management of TMWA’s water resources, cooperation and integration of regional water resource management and potential future development of additional water supplies**

Discussion: With the recent adoption of TMWA’s 2020-2040 Water Resource Plan, Staff felt it appropriate to update the Board on various ongoing water resource planning efforts. The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Board with a high-level overview of various planning efforts covering the following topics:

- Acquisition of Truckee River Mainstem and Creek Rights
- Return Flow Management Agreement
- Marlette Lake Water System MOU
 - Washoe Lake and tributary water rights, Franktown Creek
- Future Creek Exchange
- Water Banking Projects (Advanced Purified Water)
 - American Flat, other locations
- Vidler – will-serves, temporary leasing opportunities, American Flat irrigation
- UNR – Pioneer Ditch Rights & Conservation Easement Status
- Will-Serve Agreements and Donner Lake
- Spanish Springs Valley Temporary Moratorium on Groundwater rights
- Results from Damonte Ranch Reduced Water Rights Dedication Case Study

This presentation will help educate the Board on many of TMWA’s water resource planning efforts, and provide a foundation of knowledge and understanding to enable the Board members to weigh various proposals or recommendations that Staff may bring forward for consideration in the future.

TMWA WATER RESOURCE PLANNING

*TMWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS INFORMATIONAL
SESSION
JANUARY 20, 2021*



KEY TOPICS

- Acquisition of Truckee River Mainstem and Creek Rights
- Return Flow Management Agreement
- Marlette Lake MOU
 - Washoe Lake (and tributary water rights, Franktown Creek)
- Future Creek Exchange
- Water Banking Projects (Advanced Purified Water)
 - American Flat, other locations
- Vidler – will-serves, temporary leasing, American Flat irrigation
- UNR – Pioneer Ditch Rights & Conservation Easement
- Will-Serve Agreements and Donner Lake
- Spanish Springs Valley Temporary Moratorium on GW rights
- Damonte Ranch Reduced Water Rights Dedication

GOALS

- Pursue the acquisition and/or management control of mainstem and creek water rights and other sources of supply to ensure the most efficient use of Truckee River and groundwater water resources
- Reduce competition on Truckee River water rights
 - 35,000 – 40,000 AF remaining Truckee River water rights
- Create regional benefits
- Defer or negate the need for future water importation projects
- As the regional water purveyor, collaborate with water users to ensure the most efficient use of water resources
 - Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
 - TMWRF Return Flow Requirements
 - TRIGID
 - Environmental Considerations
 - Fernley Industrial Park
 - Blockchain
 - Painted Rock

ACQUISITION / MANAGEMENT OF TRUCKEE RIVER MAINSTEM AND CREEK RIGHTS

- Continue Monitoring Truckee River Water Right Transactions
- More-aggressively research potential water right purchase opportunities to add to Rule 7 Inventory
- Use Water Right Expertise to Optimize Water Resources
 - TRIGID/R/S Return Flow Management
 - NDOT water right management
 - Sparks water right instream flow applications
 - County unused creek resources
 - Fish Springs resources

RETURN FLOW MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

2020-2040 WRP – PG. 27-28

- Return flow resources are required to satisfy TMWRF's reclaimed water demands
- TMWA will manage the return flow to the Truckee River to ensure that the river and downstream water rights holders are not adversely impacted.
- TMWA will manage the return flow for existing (Reno, Sparks, UNR Farms) and future uses (TRIGID)
 - TRIGID will reimburse TMWA for costs incurred in connection to the administration of the Return Flow Management Agreement.
- TRIGID Return flow resources will include some of TRIGID's Truckee River resources, Nevada Department of Transportation's resources, and TMWA's community resources.

MARLETTE LAKE WATER SYSTEM MOU

2020-2040 WRP – PG. 64-65

- The goal is to develop the following:
 - 1) Provide agreeable terms and conditions for establishing a long-term operating agreement that maximizes the beneficial use of the state’s available water resources from the Marlette Lake Water System among TMWA, Carson City, and Virginia City.
 - 2) Provide an agreed-upon delivery schedule, special conditions of service, and pre-determined adjustments to the quantity of water available for sale each water year to address variable hydrologic conditions.
- TMWA may be able to utilize surplus Marlette Lake and East Slope water resources for return flow requirements and other purposes.

MARLETTE LAKE WATER SYSTEM – EAST SLOPE RESOURCES

- Investigating the East Slope water rights (Franktown Creek) and hydrology of other tributaries to Washoe Lake to determine how these resources benefit the region.
- Development of a basin-wide model to better understand surface water and groundwater interdependencies and ecosystem water requirements.
- Review of the Little Washoe Lake dam historic operations and potential for water resource and flood control enhancements.

FUTURE CREEK EXCHANGE

2020-2040 WRP – PG. 63-64

- TMWA currently has a creek exchange permit on Whites Creek.
 - Creek exchange allows TMWA to measure the quantity of Whites Creek water left instream and exchange that water for Truckee River water.
- Investigate the feasibility to exchange water from Galena, Browns, and/or Thomas Creeks for return flow or other purposes.
- TMWA and Washoe County are cooperating on a Thomas and Whites Creek Banking Agreement, which will allow TMWA use of the County's creek rights for groundwater recharge, conjunctive use management, water quality enhancement, drought storage, and/or instream purposes.

WATER BANKING - AMERICAN FLAT

2020-2040 WRP – PG. 68-69

- TMWA and Reno are actively working on an Advanced Purified Water Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) planning study at the north end of Reno/Stead Airport in Lemmon Valley
 - Related activities will include geochemical testing, well siting and drilling, and groundwater flow and transport modeling.
- Should the project be deemed socially, technically and economically viable, Advanced Purified Water may be recharged at the site in the near future.
- TMWA will continue to work with Reno staff on various operating and cost sharing arrangements to determine if a full-scale ASR program (1-2 MGD) can be implemented and sustained at the site.
- Other locations for recharge of Advanced Purified Water are being investigated

FISH SPRINGS GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

- Fish Springs Ranch, LLC (Vidler subsidiary) banked 8,000 AF of groundwater rights with Washoe County (up to 5,000 AF additional may be permitted in the future)
 - Honey Lake Valley, Nevada groundwater basin
 - Available for municipal use within TMWA's service area
- Roughly 300 AF have been committed to North Valleys projects
- Vidler has requested TMWA consider allowing rights to be available for will-serve commitments throughout the Truckee Meadows
- Potential Benefits
 - Allows TMWA to more quickly prove beneficial use of the rights
 - Stretches Truckee River resources farther
- Overarching Considerations
 - TMWA must be made whole, not adversely impacted
 - Start with small volume as pilot project
 - Total cost to development must be equal
- FSR water may also be available for short term leasing, such as City of Reno American Flat irrigation, or other opportunities

UNR – PIONEER DITCH WATER RIGHTS & CONSERVATION EASEMENT

- Over the last two years, TMWA has had various discussions with UNR staff regarding the possible acquisition of decreed Truckee River water rights owned by the Nevada System of Higher Education which are appurtenant to the Main Station Field Laboratory (UNR Farms)
- The water rights consist of 2,954.38 AF of direct diversion irrigation rights, 1,164 AF were offered for sale. TMWA's interests include:
 - Increased drought protection
 - UNR Farms reclaimed water use requires return flow water rights
 - Maintains the water rights for community growth
- A conservation easement was also proposed that would have maintained the agricultural and educational values of the property
- Both the sale of water rights and the conservation easement were turned down at the December 4, 2020 Board of Regents meeting

WILL-SERVE COMMITMENTS AND DONNER LAKE

- TMWA purchased TCID's 4,750 AF of Donner Lake for \$17.4M
- Annual Property tax is \$275,000 for all Donner rights
- Analyze ways to use some portion of Donner for Will-Serve Commitments while preserving drought storage and resource sustainability
- Use in combination with TMWA supplemental groundwater resources
- Work with Federal Water Master and State Engineer
- Currently working with the Truckee River Watershed Council and other regional stakeholders to create a stewardship plan for Donner Lake
- Future work, possibly dredging, will be needed to access all TMWA's drought storage in the lake

SPANISH SPRINGS VALLEY TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON GROUNDWATER RIGHTS

- Spanish Springs Valley has a perennial yield of 1,000 AFA
- 7,100 AF of groundwater rights and domestic wells exist in the valley
- TMWA controls 3,900 AF of the groundwater rights, and has reduced pumping to approx. 800 AFA to help reduce water level declines
- Other users and domestic wells pump 1,400 AFA
- TMWA relies on conjunctive use and recharge to maintain sustainable water levels where we can – more needs to be done
- TMWA has prepared a regional groundwater model which suggests that recharge needs to be expanded to 2,000 AFA
 - Other groundwater users benefit from TMWA's efforts
 - TMWA has temporarily suspended accepting Spanish Springs groundwater rights for will serve commitments until a long-term regional plan is developed

DAMONTE RANCH VILLAGE CASE STUDY

- Damonte Ranch Village 8A-8D Residential Subdivisions (2012-14)
 - Strict CC&Rs reduce ability to use water on front area
 - Front of lot landscaping and irrigation controlled by HOA
 - Prohibit owner from changing front landscaping
 - Limit backyard turf size to no more than 20% of lot size
 - Using roughly 58% of committed water rights
- Analyze whether rule 7 changes are appropriate to allow lower water dedications in certain situations
 - CC&R restricted lots

WATER RESOURCE SUMMARY

	STRETCH TRUCKEE RIVER RESOURCE	NEW RESOURCE FOR WILL- SERVES	MAXIMIZE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCE	SUSTAINABILITY AND DROUGHT RESILIENCY	REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
ADDITIONAL TRUCKEE RIVER RIGHTS			X	X	X
RETURN FLOW MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT	X		X		X
MARLETTE LAKE	X		X	X	X
VIDLER	X	X	X	X	X
CREEK EXCHANGE	X	X	X		X
UNR – PIONEER DITCH RIGHTS & CONSERVATION EASEMENT			X	X	X
WATER BANKING - AMERICAN FLAT, OTHER SITES	X	X	X	X	X
DONNER LAKE WILL-SERVES		X	X	X	
SPANISH SPRINGS TEMP. MORATORIUM ON GW			X	X	
DAMONTE RANCH REDUCED WATER RIGHTS DEDICATION	X		X		

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- This presentation was intended to help educate the Board on many of TMWA's ongoing water resource planning efforts
 - It provides a foundation of knowledge to better enable Board members to weigh future proposals or recommendations
- Staff will keep the Board apprised as analyses are completed
- Staff will prioritize analyses based on Board comments and discussion

Thank you!
Questions?



STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Board Members
THRU: Mark Foree, General Manager
FROM: John Zimmerman, Water Resources Manager
DATE: January 6, 2021
SUBJECT: **Discussion and informational presentation in response to Board member inquiries regarding suspension of water service for water waste on private laterals and landlord authority to impose water service surcharge on tenant rent bills and possible direction to staff**

SUMMARY

Board members Duerr and Brekhus requested staff provide input on two issues. First, member Duerr asked for staff to provide input on whether TMWA's rules allow it to suspend or terminate water service if the customer is wasting water by not repairing a water leak on the customer's property within a reasonable time period. Second, member Brekhus asked staff to research whether landlords are legally authorized to impose a water service surcharge on tenant rent bills.

TMWA AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND WATER SERVICE DUE TO UNREPAIRED WATER LEAKS

Rule 3.D authorizes TMWA to terminate delivery of water to a customer if the customer fails to repair water leaks on their private water lines, which is considered water waste under TMWA's rules. Under Rule 3.D, TMWA must provide two notices to the customer before terminating water service. The first notice must be sent 10 days before TMWA intends to terminate water service. If TMWA does not receive a response to the first notice, then it must send a second notice 48 hours before terminating water service. Both notices must be personally served or sent by first class mail to the customer's address and clearly describe the reason for the termination and the procedure for reinstating water service. In all cases, TMWA staff make numerous attempts to help the customer avoid termination of water service before sending the formal notices. In some cases, however, TMWA staff are forced to send the notices and terminate water service if the customer does not respond.

LANDLORD AUTHORITY TO ADD SURCHARGE TO WATER SERVICE ON TENANT RENT BILLS

General Counsel Michael Pagni researched the legal restrictions on landlords and determined there are no Nevada laws prohibiting a landlord from adding a water service surcharge to tenant rent bills. In Nevada, residential landlord tenant relations are governed by Chapter 118A of Nevada Revised Statutes. The restrictions in NRS Chapter 118A are fairly

limited, and no provisions specifically address “marking up” utility bills payable by tenants. Nevada does not have rent control laws, which means generally a landlord is permitted to set the rent at whatever level and include within the rent whatever components they want. The only references to utility charges in NRS 118A are found in NRS 118A.200, which simply requires that all written rental agreements set forth the “respective responsibilities of the landlord and tenant as to the payment of utility charges.” NRS 118A.200 also requires the identification of any other “fees which are required and the purpose for which they are required,” but again there is little if any restriction on what those fees may relate to or the amount that may be charged. That being said, NRS 118A.230 authorizes a court to refuse to enforce any provision in a rental agreement deemed unconscionable at the time made.

NRS 704 contains some provisions for tenant service charge accounts where landlords “resell” utility service within mobile home parks, but these provisions do not apply to residential tenancies under NRS 118A. See NRS 704.940(5); NAC 704.980 to 704.991. NRS Chapter 704 also requires certain notices be posted for tenants prior to termination of utility service to landlords, but otherwise includes no restrictions on landlords “marking up” utility bills. NRS 704.1835.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Mark Foree, General Manager
DATE: January 11, 2021
SUBJECT: **General Manager's Report**

Attached please find the written reports from the Management team including the Operations Report (*Attachment A*), the Water Resource and the Annexation Activity Report (*Attachment B*), and the Customer Services Report (*Attachment C*).

Included in your agenda packet are press clippings from December 10, 2020 through January 12, 2021.

Also, a *Tell the Board Submission* was received regarding a customer's concern of developers requiring large communities to landscape with non-drought tolerant plants and trees. Staff replied that the minimum landscaping requirements are set by the local governments.

Standing Advisory Committee Recruitment

Staff has advertised the vacancies on the TMWA Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) via TMWA's bill insert and social media. The application deadline is Monday, March 29th. The SAC will review the applications at their April meeting and their recommendations will be presented at the April Board meeting.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
THRU: Mark Foree, General Manager
FROM: Scott Estes, Director of Engineering
BY: Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator and Conservation Supervisor
DATE: Jan 11, 2021
SUBJECT: **January 2021 Operations Report**

Summary

- The water supply outlook for the region is fair
- Lake Tahoe storage is @ 42% of capacity
- Combined total upstream reservoir storage is 42% of maximum capacity
- Customer demands are at wintertime levels (~34 MGD)
- Hydroelectric revenue for December 2020 was \$150,344

(A) Water Supply

- **River Flows** - Truckee River flows at the CA/NV state line are below normal for this time of year. Discharge was approximately 320 cubic feet per second (CFS) this morning as a result of TROA operations.
- **Reservoir Storage** - Truckee River reservoir storage is virtually unchanged from last month @ 42% of capacity. The elevation of Lake Tahoe is 6225.58 feet (3.52' below maximum storage elevation). Storage values for each reservoir as of 1/11 are as follows:

Reservoir	Current Storage (Acre-Feet)	% of Capacity (Percent)
Tahoe	313,700	42%
Boca	9,230	23%
Donner	3,019	32%
Independence	10,866	62%
Prosser	5,813	20%
Stampede	103,604	46%

In addition to approximately 13,900 acre-feet of storage in Donner and Independence reservoirs, TMWA has about 21,300 acre-feet of water stored between Lake Tahoe, Boca and Stampede reservoirs under the terms of TROA. TMWA's total combined upstream reservoir storage is approximately 35,200 acre-feet (as of 1/11).

- **Snowpack** - Both the Lake Tahoe and Truckee River basins are reporting 70% of normal as of 1/11. January, which is one of the three prime snowpack building months, has been anything but. There were no major storms through the first 11 days, and there is nothing in the forecast through at least January 21st. It is supposed to be snowing this time of year, and each passing warm sunny day in the Sierra makes it that much less likely that we'll end the season on a solid note as far as snowpack is concerned. It is still early though, and exactly how the second half of the season will go down in the books cannot be predicted with much certainty right now. So, this winter cannot be written off just yet.
- **Runoff Forecast** - Based on the latest snowpack values and pre-existing conditions coming into the winter, the runoff forecast is noticeably below average for Lake Tahoe @ 61% of normal, and 63% of normal for the Truckee River at Farad.
- **Outlook** - While the snowpack status and the projected runoff forecast is below average, there is still enough carry-over storage in Lake Tahoe to help provide normal river flows for quite some time after the runoff season ends. This is a very pivotal year in terms of the status of the region's water supply, as another dry winter this time around could possibly have us on the brink of our next drought. If the winter storm track doesn't start delivering to our region very soon, projections for runoff are going to decline rapidly. With upstream reservoir storage at roughly 40% of capacity, the water supply outlook for northern Nevada is not as good as it has been in recent years. However, there is still enough carry-over storage in Lake Tahoe to help provide normal Truckee River flows for at least the next 12 months (an 83% chance) despite that fact. Furthermore, while the likelihood of experiencing our second dry year in a row increases with each passing day, the possibility of an average or normal winter at this juncture is also still not out of the question. A couple of big winter storms during the wildcard months of March and April can also completely change the water supply outlook in the Tahoe and Truckee basins. But regardless of how this year (or the next) turns out, TMWA has more than enough drought storage and back up water supplies to meet projected customer demand for many decades to come even under the most protracted worse than worse case drought scenario imagined.

(B) Water Production

- **Demand** - TMWA's customer demand averaged 34 million gallons per day for the last full week of December. Overall, surface water is providing about 78% of our supply and groundwater the other 22%.

(C) Hydro Production

Generation - Truckee River flows at Farad (CA/NV state line) for the month of December 2020 averaged 256 CFS, which is below average. The Fleish and Verdi power plants were on-line and available 100% of the time. The Washoe Power plant was still out of service as the flume rebuild continues. Below average river flows last month are the reason for the below normal generation at Fleish and Verdi. Statistics for the month as follows:

Hydro Plant	Days On-Line	Generation (Megawatt hours)	Est. Revenue (Dollars)	Est. Revenue (Dollars/Day)
Fleish	31	1,198	\$ 88,567	\$ 2,857
Verdi	31	843	\$ 61,777	\$ 1,993
Washoe	0	0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Totals	62	2,041	\$ 150,344	\$ 4,850



STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Board Members
THRU: Mark Foree, General Manager
FROM: John Zimmerman, Manager, Water Resources
DATE: January 12, 2021
SUBJECT: Report Water Resources and Annexation Activity

RULE 7

Rule 7 water resource purchases and will-serve commitment sales against purchased water resources through this reporting period:

Beginning Balance		4,115.08 AF
Purchases of water rights	2.70 AF	
Refunds	0.00 AF	
Sales	– 66.18 AF	
Adjustments	0.48 AF	
Ending Balance		4,052.08 AF

Price per acre foot at report date: \$7,600

FISH SPRINGS RANCH, LLC GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

Through the merger of Washoe County’s water utility, TMWA assumed a Water Banking and Trust Agreement with Fish Springs Ranch, LLC, a subsidiary of Vidler. Under the Agreement, TMWA holds record title to the groundwater rights for the benefit of Fish Springs. Fish Springs may sell and assign its interest in these groundwater rights to third parties for dedication to TMWA for a will-serve commitment in Areas where TMWA can deliver groundwater from the Fish Springs groundwater basin. Currently, TMWA can deliver Fish Springs groundwater to Area 10 only (Stead-Silver Lake-Lemmon Valley). The following is a summary of Fish Springs’ resources.

Beginning Balance		7,696.12 AF
Committed water rights	– 0.00 AF	
Ending Balance		7,696.12 AF

Price per acre foot at report date: \$41,500 (for SFR and MFR); \$36,000 (for all other services)¹

¹ Price reflects avoided cost of Truckee River water right related fees and TMWA Supply & Treatment WSF charge.

WATER SERVICE AREA ANNEXATIONS

There have been no annexations since the date of the last Board meeting.

INTERRUPTIBLE LARGE VOLUME NON-POTABLE SERVICE

None this reporting period.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
THRU: Mark Foree, General Manager
FROM: Marci Westlake, Manager Customer Service
DATE: January 20, 2021
SUBJECT: December Customer Service Report

The following is a summary of Customer Service activity for December 2020.

Ombudsman

- Customer called and wanted a better understanding regarding a billing concern. We were able to explain the bill and customer was happy.

Communications

Nothing for the month of December

Conservation (2020 Calendar year)

- 1,457 Water Watcher Contacts
- 1,597 Water Usage Reviews

Customer Calls – December

- 8,714 phone calls handled
- Average handling time – 4 minutes, 16 seconds per call
- Average speed of answer – 22 seconds per call

Billing –December

- 134,102 bills issued.
- 8 (0.00%) corrected bills.
- 24,355 customers (18%) have signed up for paperless billing to date.

Service Orders –December (% is rounded)

- 7,319 service orders taken
- 3,477 (48%) move-ins / move-outs
- 704 (10%) cut-out-for-non-payment and cut-in after receiving payments, including deposits and checks for tamper only
- 334 (5%) zero consumption meter checks
- 437 (6%) re-read meters
- 856 (11%) new meter sets and meter/register/ERT exchanges and equipment checks
- 330 (5%) problems / emergencies, including cut-out for customer repairs, dirty water, no water, leaks, pressure complaints, safety issues, installing water meter blankets, etc.
- 92 (1%) high-bill complaints / audit and water usage review requests
- 1,089 (14%) various other service orders

Remittance – December

- 28,627 mailed-in payments
- 27,975 electronic payments
- 43,590 payments via RapidPay (EFT)
- 20,814 one-time bank account payments
- 8,239 credit card payments
- 198 store payments
- 1,070 payments via drop box or at front desk

Collections –December

- 18,573 accounts received a late charge
- Mailed 9,231 10-day delinquent notices, 0.07% of accounts
- Mailed 3,485 48-hour delinquent notices, 0.03% of accounts
- 1,303 accounts eligible for disconnect
- 222 accounts were disconnected (including accounts that had been disconnected-for-non-payment that presented NSF checks for their reconnection)
- 0.14% write-off to revenue

Meter Statistics – Fiscal Year to Date

- 0 Meter retrofits completed
- 2,721 Meter exchanges completed
- 1,488 New business meter sets completed
- 130,785 Meters currently installed



TMWA Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Press Clippings

December 10, 2020 – January 12, 2021



Fleish Spill Structure Reconstruction Project

NEWS

Reno doctor, UNR engineer develop new COVID-19 tool that estimates threat up to 10 days out

Amy Alonzo Reno Gazette Journal

Published 9:54 a.m. PT Dec. 8, 2020 | Updated 4:00 p.m. PT Dec. 8, 2020

Trends in regional COVID- cases can now be predicted up to 10 days in advance thanks to a new predictive tool that syncs with the Truckee Meadows COVID Risk Meter.

Co-developed by a Reno physician and a University of Nevada, Reno associate professor and engineer, the new predictive capabilities will allow the community and medical professionals to prepare for surges if there are not any changes in COVID behavior and to make more informed decisions up to a week out.

“As a result, as far as I can tell, we are one of the first in the U.S. to have this predictive tool on our COVID meter,” said Risk Meter task force member and Reno pediatrician Dr. Ron Aryel, who developed the idea for the predictive COVID tool.

The Truckee Meadows COVID Risk Meter (covidriskmeter.org) uses local COVID data to inform the community about current virus risk. The meter uses five indicators to give daily updates on coronavirus threat levels in the community –risk assessment, test positivity, daily new cases, hospital beds and ICU use.

The predictive tool “will allow us to make sure we have the bandwidth to handle X more cases,” said Assistant Professor and aerospace engineer Aditya Nair of the University’s Department of Mechanical Engineering. “Our job is to say what the data will look like seven days from now so that hospitals know how many staff they need to cover five more beds or 10 more beds.”

Nair analyzed months’ worth of data to turn past numbers into predictions for the future.

“It works very much like a weather forecast,” Nair said. “It has the power to predict how and when openings should be conducted and how people should plan their lives. And the more

data we have, the better the model will perform.”

Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at aalonzo@gannett.com or (775) 741-8588. Here's how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.

NEWS

Rutgers professor discusses science of hand-washing for coronavirus

Astha Lakhankar

Dec 8, 2020, 9:01 PM



Photo by Courtesy of Donald Schaffner

Donald Schaffner, extension specialist and distinguished professor in the Department of Food Science, said the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is easy to remove by washing hands with soap.

Frequent hand-washing is essential for ensuring health during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#).

Donald Schaffner, extension specialist and distinguished professor in the Department of Food Science, discussed how hand-washing provides a strong defense against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Soap molecules can attach part of themselves to both water molecules and particles like the virus, he said. This unique property allows soap to remove the virus from hands, along with dirt, oil and grease particles.

“Really what you’re doing when you’re washing your hands is you’re not killing those microorganisms, you’re just washing them down the drain,” Schaffner said.

He said the COVID-19 virus is easier to remove than more resistant viruses, such as [norovirus](#).

“(The COVID-19 virus) is what we call an enveloped virus, which means it’s actually kind of a wimpy virus,” Schaffner said. “Which means it’s pretty easy to kill (and) it’s pretty easy to remove.”

The basic procedure for hand-washing includes wetting hands thoroughly, lathering them, rinsing after 15 seconds and drying them using a cloth or paper towel, he said.

A common misconception about hand-washing, Schaffner said, is that a hot water temperature is the most effective for removing germs. Research demonstrates that the water temperature used does not matter.

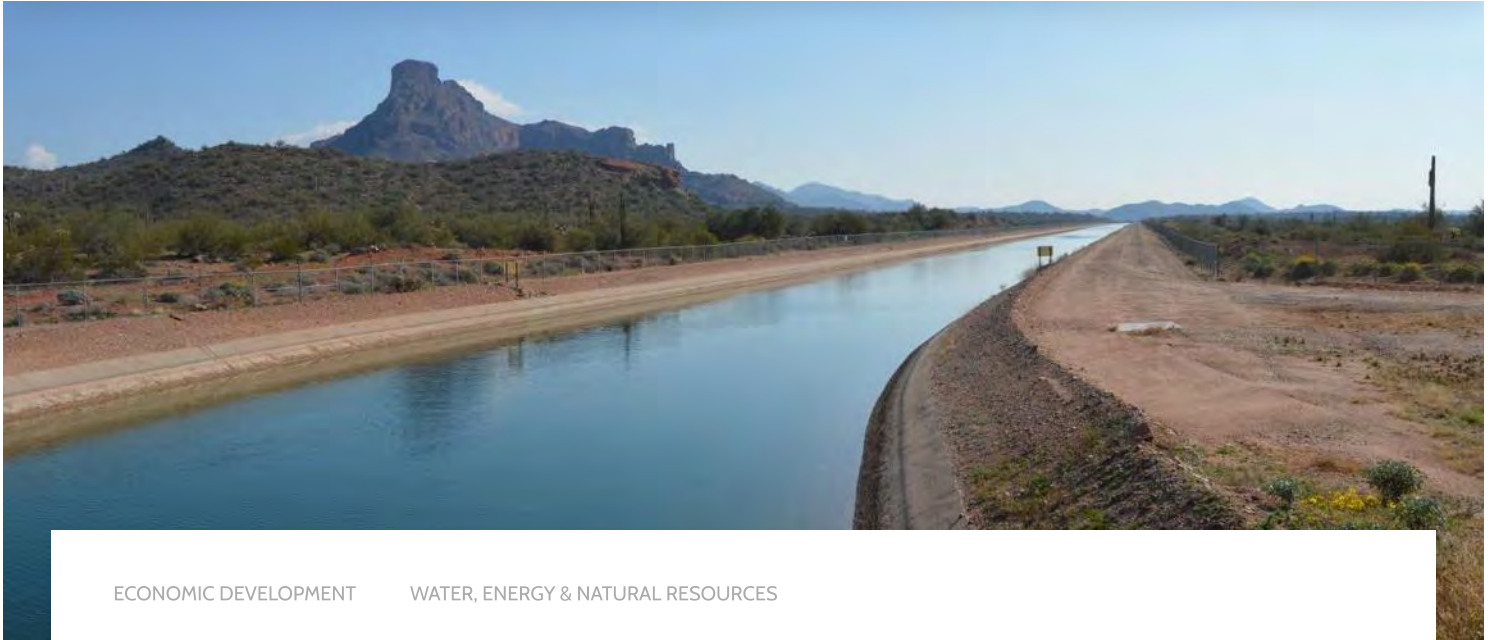
“What you want to do when you’re washing your hands is ... to use a water temperature that’s comfortable ... so that you can do a good job and really take the time that you need,” he said.

If soap and running water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a convenient and effective alternative, Schaffner said.

He also said since groceries pose little risk for contracting COVID-19, washing hands or using hand sanitizer after handling them is a better course of action than sanitizing the groceries themselves. The CDC saw a [large increase](#) in calls to poison control centers about cleaner and disinfectant exposures, indicating overuse of these products, Schaffner said.

There has been evidence that incidences of food-borne diseases have gone down during the pandemic, which may be partly due to hand-washing, sanitation and other COVID-19 prevention measures, he said.

“I hope the pandemic has made people aware of the importance of good sanitation and of washing your hands,” Schaffner said.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WATER, ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES

ASU study reveals groundwater generates 43 percent of state GDP

Victoria Harker  December 9, 2020  5 min read  Add comment

A new study highlights the tremendous impact groundwater has on Arizona's economy and underscores the need to make sure every community has tools to protect and manage it far into the future, said Todd Reeve, director of Business for Water Stewardship (BWS), which commissioned the report.

"Today, Arizona relies on groundwater for 40 percent of its water supply, and sustained access to groundwater remains essential for industrial, agricultural and municipal uses in Arizona," said Reeve, whose organization currently is working with dozens of businesses across the state that are investing in and advancing solutions to make sure communities, economies and ecosystems have clean water to flourish.

BWS released the first-of-its-kind study Tuesday during a virtual event for new and returning state lawmakers who will be tasked with finding solutions to address groundwater overuse and the effects of the megadrought. The Arizona Chamber Foundation co-hosted the event.

Groundwater generated \$1.2 trillion into economy from 2010 to 2018

Conducted by Arizona State University's (ASU) Seidman Research Institute, the study calculated the economic impact of groundwater use from 2010 to 2018 in the state's five most populous regions: Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott, Pinal County and Santa Cruz County.

injection into the economy during the nine-year period. When broken down on an annual basis, that amounts to approximately 43 percent of the state's annual average GDP.

In Phoenix alone, groundwater generated \$102.5 billion of average annual contribution to state GDP, supporting over one million jobs, the study states.

"These findings show just how essential groundwater is to the state's economy," said Tim James, director of research at the Seidman Institute. "As our state continues to grow and thrive, understanding the crucial importance of groundwater to the economy will be key in planning for the future."

Study evaluated groundwater impact in most populous regions

The study looked at the economic impact of groundwater deliveries from 2010 to 2018 in the five most populated regions of the state that are designated as "Active Management Areas" (AMA) for water management purposes. The AMAs are regulated under the state's Groundwater Management Act of 1980.

Among the study findings:

- Approximately 11.7 million acre feet of groundwater was used by agriculture, industrial and municipal customers during the nine-year period
- Groundwater supplies in the five AMAs contributed to annual employment of 1.4 to 1.7 million jobs, depending on the year
- More than half of the total groundwater uses, 50.1 percent, took place in the Phoenix AMA
- More than a third of the groundwater, 35.5 percent, was used in the Pinal AMA
- The Tucson AMA accounted for 11.7 percent of total groundwater used

Legislation needed to guide groundwater use statewide

While the five AMAs are regulated under the groundwater act to ensure adequate water for the future, the rest of the state is pretty much a "free for all" when it comes to tapping into aquifers, Reeve said.

Legislation will be needed to protect groundwater in these areas as well, he said. Some of the bills that have been proposed include incentives for industry, farmers, landowners and others to conserve water.

Most importantly, the rural areas of the state that rely almost entirely on groundwater will need tools to carry out conservation and water protection plans based on their local needs. Page 6 of 97

Businesses also will need to continue to invest in Arizona projects as part of the solution, Reeve said.

Major corporations like Intel Corp, Waste Management, Microsoft, Cox, Arizona Public Service, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Procter & Gamble, Reformation, Silk, and Swire Coca-Cola, USA have invested millions of dollars in recent years on conservation projects to protect communities, businesses and wildlife habitats.

That was something that was unheard of not so long ago, said Reeve, whose organization is currently working with dozens of companies on projects across Arizona.

“Ten or 20 years ago, the notion of companies investing their brand and their financial resources in projects outside of their own operations would have been unheard of,” Reeve said. “And today we’re seeing this growing commitment, especially across Arizona, in leveraging this business interest to help shore up Arizona’s water resources and create an environment where these businesses have predictable water supply and they can follow through on plans to expand, to hire and to site here in Arizona.”

Five Active Management Area results

The Seidman study analyzed the economic impact of groundwater in the five AMAs:

- [Phoenix Fact Sheet](#)
- [Pinal Fact Sheet](#)
- [Prescott Fact Sheet](#)
- [Santa Cruz Fact Sheet](#)
- [Tucson Fact Sheet](#)

To read the full report, go to: [The Economic Importance of Groundwater in Arizona](#).

Business for Water Stewardship

Business for Water Stewardship is a program of the Bonneville Environmental Foundation that helps businesses advance solutions to ensure that our communities, economies and ecosystems have enough clean water to flourish. We provide ways for businesses to actively help sustain

rivers and replenish aquifers, promote forward-looking water policies, and boost their reputations as environmental stewards.

The L. William Seidman Research Institute serves as a link between the local, national, and international business communities and the W. P. Carey School of Business at ASU. First established in 1985 to serve as a center for applied business research and a consultancy resource for the Arizona business community, Seidman collects, analyzes and disseminates information about local economies, benchmarks industry practices, and identifies emerging business research issues that affect productivity and competitiveness.

To read more about the work the institute is doing, go to: [The L. William Seidman Research Institute](#)

Arizona State University Seidman Research Institute



Victoria Harker

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How Will Water Affordability be Defined for the Next 20 Years?

DECEMBER 9, 2020

BY CONTRIBUTING
AUTHOR



The EPA has a chance to listen and implement water industry leaders' recommendations on affordability using new data, methods, metrics and digital technologies. Here's a review of submitted comments to the EPA on its proposed affordability guidance updates.

By Greg Baird

In the United States, the water affordability paradigm is based on a fundamentally flawed convention that the average water and sewer bill with a combined value over 4.0 percent or 4.5 percent of median household income (%MHI) is considered "unaffordable." This metric stems from a 2 percent of MHI benchmark intended to measure community-level affordability for wastewater created by the U.S. EPA's 1997 Combined Sewer Overflows — Guidance for Financial Capability Assessment and Schedule Development (1997 FCA Guidance). This guidance is intended to assess a community's financial capability to implement project schedules and control measures needed to meet Clean Water Act (CWA) obligations. The EPA's 1997 FCA has erroneously

become the defacto standard to measure household affordability for the last two decades and is widely used as a financial affordability benchmark during utility rate setting discussions.

On Sept. 15, 2020, when EPA released its [Proposed 2020 Financial Capability Assessment Guidance \(Proposed 2020 FCA\)](#) asking for comments due back on Oct. 19, 2020, hundreds of utilities reacted at the anticipation of EPA signaling a change in how the agency considers the financial burdens when developing implementation schedules for CWA permits and consent decrees applicable to public utilities. Any new change has been long coming as several organizations have been appealing to the EPA to make changes to the 1997 FCA during the past 20 years.

A key input came from a 2016 Congressional direction for the EPA to contract with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to create a framework for “community affordability.” The NAPA report, “Developing a New Framework for Community Affordability of Clean Water Services” was guided by the feedback and participation from the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the National League of Cities (NLC), the Brookings Institute, Center for Progressive Reform (CPR), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM).

In an effort to further collaborate with local decision makers to help ensure the proper collection and treatment of domestic sewage and wastewater, the EPA requested comments on the proposed 2020 Financial Capability Assessment, which would expand the metrics EPA uses to consider a community’s financial capability to fulfill water obligations. While specific and sometimes narrow questions were asked as part of the comments, several organizations also provided overall feedback concerning water infrastructure and affordability. This critical feedback sheds greater light on the water industry’s struggle with defining water affordability and raises concerns over elements of the Proposed 2020 FCA.

What Water Sector Organizations Are Saying

The submitted comments from water/sewer utility trade associations, local government organizations including finance and public works, civil engineering associations, underground infrastructure management experts and manufacturers, establish a resounding voice of conscience from the U.S. water sector that state and federal agencies — specifically the EPA — should listen to.

[AWWA](#), a 501c3 scientific and educational member association with 50,000 drinking water members, along with WEF’s comprehensive study of wastewater and [NACWA](#) with the nation’s top clean water utilities, have provided praise to the EPA leadership and staff in responding to the NAPA report. A 2019 joint funded study from the organizations encouraged the EPA to finalize the guidance with the caveat that additional adjustments, materials and future steps will still be needed. As for the Proposed 2020 FCA, both alternatives are recommended to be available to all applicants. The new metrics of the lowest quintile residential income indicator and poverty indicator should be included in both alternatives with a special emphasis on cash flow modeling and household-level affordability analysis of a “total” water household burden (including drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, recycling, etc.).

The tone of disappointment and concern in not following all of the NAPA revelations and NACWA analysis was expressed in their collective feedback related to any retention of the 1997 guidance, proposed adjustments household size and any use of the arbitrary 2 percent as any kind of benchmark. Additionally, clarity was requested for the linkage between the FCA to any flexible project schedule and the use of the term “useful life”. Above all, the EPA needs to clearly state the FCA is only a scheduling tool and does *not* define water affordability in the broader sense. It also should *not* be used in a way that utility managers will not misinterpret that once the lowest quintile reaches 2 percent of their income on water costs, that rates have somehow become unaffordable.

The Role of Local Government

Local governments also have a direct interest in any proposed changes to the FCA. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, representing cities with populations greater than 30,000, the National League of Cities (NLC) representing more than 19,000 cities, towns and villages, the National Association of Counties (NACo) with counties and 20,000 members of the [Government Finance Officers Association \(GFOA\)](#) point out that even a Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds (SRFs) and WIFIA loans, local governments are currently responsible for 98 percent of all water and wastewater expenditures to comply with federal and state unfunded mandates.

Since 2009, collectively, they have promoted the use of green infrastructure, creating an Integrated Planning Framework (IP Framework) and revising the affordability guidance. As such, they support the Proposed 2021 FCA and its flexibility and transparency, but want it finalized with the following revisions: Remove MHI as a benchmark which has masked financial burdens, clarify “useful life”, allow flexibility on the schedule of timeframes for compliance on a project by project basis and clarify how new Water Quality Standards (lead pipe, PFAS, etc.) will fit in. The emphasis is that the EPA needs to allow enough flexibility to allow for the development of a solution that meets that community’s needs and that local officials want to work with the EPA to establish a timeframe for compliance that is synchronized with a local government’s ability to invest and operate. Once again, the imperative is to include all water costs “all in” and not “siloes” and have the communities submit actual utility billing data to improve transparency and accuracy in determining affordability.

The EPA now finds itself at the crossroads of partnering with and supporting the industry’s water affordability recommendations

While 85 percent of water utilities and 54 percent of sewer utilities are owned and controlled by municipal governments, most fall under the public works department or utilities department. The American Public Works Association (APWA) with 30,000 members recommends that the EPA support legislative and regulatory efforts to encourage water systems with noncompliance issues to voluntarily partner with successful and compliant utilities to limit the liability of the “Good Samaritan” water utility. APWA also recommends rate design that is more accurate and reflective of full cost-of-service and that cost-benefit analyses and feasibility studies are needed. APWA points out that affordability varies by community, region and economic conditions and that

use of MHI is arbitrary, does not include average water use and is a grossly inadequate metric for affordability. APWA also stresses the inclusion of stormwater management with CWA compliance and cost considerations. APWA recommends volumetric sewer prices based on indoor flow and that rate making and design consider low flow charges for low volume customers which are often low income. APWA explains that even while the new FCA provides a better picture of what communities can afford, it will not, however, resolve the need for additional federal support and funding. APWA urges that the “EPA should request from Congress and Congress should provide substantial increases in federal funding for investment in water infrastructure.”

While the EPA can provide more flexible and extended schedules, public works professionals are concerned about the impact of delaying compliance of water pollution regulations in order to just keep utility rates low. Clean water agencies have also raised the same fear that schedule delays have real consequences. Many are not willing to simply accept the public health risks and a scenario where the community and low-income populations have to wait for water quality improvements.

This raises what some have described as “the bigger policy challenge” and asking the question that, as a nation, will we provide communities (low-income populations) the assistance and funding to have access to clean and safe water? Will the EPA finally address these bigger policy questions?

The [American Society of Civil Engineers \(ASCE\)](#) with their 150,000 engineers every four years publish the Infrastructure Report Card which gave water infrastructure a “D” grade and wastewater infrastructure a D+ in 2017. A stormwater grade is expected in 2021. ASCE highlighted the issues of the 16,000 wastewater treatment plants that are functioning at about 81 percent of their design capacities while 15 percent have reached or exceeded it and the chronic trend of underinvestment which continues to widen the financial gap. ASCE reminds the EPA that while each water, sewer, storm enterprise fund is separate with their own rates, charges and fees, each requires its own financial assessment of current and future risks and costs to start to understand the water affordability issue of a community. ASCE warns the EPA that any new FCA guidance will once again be incorrectly adopted as a national affordability standard and that each community will still need to struggle with their own definition of affordability and equity.

ASCE suggests the additional federal requirements of the “Drinking Water System Risk Assessments and Emergency Response Plans” required under America’s Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) also needs to be considered. ASCE supports reducing costs and fostering optimization through the use of life cycle cost analysis and recommends that the EPA develop a unit cost template and common standard of metrics as found in the AWWA Utility Benchmarking publication for performance management. In doing so, they also recommend separating maintenance costs from operational costs. ASCE strongly recommends that rate studies and cost service models following the AWWA M1 published guidelines be required and “growth pays for growth” policies should be updated so developers “buying into the system” can help offset the cost burden of existing customers. Many times, growth’s share of the costs fall to the financial burden of low-income customers.

ASCE proposes the remaining useful life of an asset be calculated as part of an asset management and condition assessment program and the correct remaining life be reflected in the accounting system to increase the accuracy and valuation of the utility. This more accurate valuation can then update rates and the value of the

utility for privatization, consolidation or regionalization reviews to mitigate affordability concerns where a change in the governance or management model maybe needed. Engineers also recognize that grey infrastructure projects are not the only solution in meeting compliance issues but the application of digital technologies, remote monitoring, advanced analytics and digital twins can reduce costs and risks as another means to address affordability issues and emerging water quality and contaminant concerns. ASCE has a utility asset management (UAM) division and water and sewer asset management committee to help promote the use of best practices to reduce risks and the total cost of ownership.

Asset Management

Asset management has been a key solution for consent decrees. In 2003, the Buried Asset Management Institute – International (BAMI-I) was established to help with the largest and most complex federal consent decree at Atlanta’s Department of Watershed Management. Through an EPA Cooperative Agreement in 2006, the Certificate of Training in Asset Management courses (CTAM) were developed. BAMI-I’s response (now at Purdue University) calls to eliminate the 2 percent metric which does not have any real justification. BAMI-I recommends cost of service rate studies and cash flow models to be conducted for all separate enterprise facilities (water, sewer, and storm) to understand the actual costs to maintain current service levels now, in the future and the costs of unfunded mandates. Using the asset management principles of business continuity and cost improvement to evaluate ways to reduce the overall life cycle costs of an asset or treatment process, they call for new technologies, processes and materials including deploying sensors and developing digital twins to increase operational awareness. BAMI-I suggests that between the local, regional, state and federal levels of cooperation the mix of funding and timing of the project should be decided to maximize the life cycle value of the assets and protect the public health.

The underground infrastructure manufacturer’s [PVC Pipe Association](#)’s comments explained how sustainable water resources and service levels connect the entire urban water cycle as described by the [US Water Alliance](#) One Water concept to support affordability. The PVC Association boldly states that affordability needs to be prioritized with “all water” and the EPA should not presuppose what affordability, or the “value of water” is for a community. “Water, if prioritized, should never be “unaffordable” otherwise it devalues life.” While recommending rate studies and cash flow models, life cycle analysis and life cycle assessments to reduce the carbon footprint, they also would require each project to have a checklist of digital technologies, solutions and strategies applied for each infrastructure group and only base implementation schedules on cost and risk analysis.

[Xylem, Inc.](#), a global water equipment, instrumentation and digital solutions company also provided supporting comments. Xylem, as with the other water leaders, recommends analyzing the true economic burden for “all water services” and incorporating the best available technology, such as digital technologies that improve water quality and deliver operational cost savings.

Xylem says it believes that “innovation is key to a community’s affordability in the immediate and long-term. The deployment of digital technologies, which did not exist in 1997 or when projects “did their research” need to be included. This includes the use of SCADA, GIS, sensors, IoT, wireless and secured connectivity, data collection

and cloud storage, advanced analytics, and the use of AI, machine learning and digital twins. It also include development of asset monitoring technologies for distribution, collection, treatment, storm and re-use and they should be included in the requirements, project plans and implementation schedules.

It is anticipated when finalized, the 2020 FCA will support negotiations of schedules for implementing CWA requirements for municipalities and local authorities. The EPA has requested stakeholder comments and the feedback overwhelmingly recommends using new data, new methods and metrics, as well as innovative digital technologies.

The EPA now finds itself at the crossroads of partnering with and supporting the industry's water affordability recommendations. The questions remain – can the federal agency move away from 1997 framework into the 2020s, applying innovation and changing how projects will be scheduled and how affordability will be discussed for the next 20 years? Will we as a nation decide to support one water equity for disadvantaged communities who need clean and safe water services?

One thing is clear, the water industry leaders stand united as willing partners to deliver sustainable and affordable water services for the nation.

Greg Baird is president of the Water Finance Research Foundation and a frequent contributor to WF&M. As a management consultant, he specializes in long-term utility planning, infrastructure asset management and capital funding strategies for municipal utilities in the United States. He has served as a municipal finance officer in California and as the CFO of Colorado's third-largest utility.



Tags: [Affordability](#), [ASCE](#), [Asset Management](#), [AWWA](#), [EPA](#), [GFOA](#), [Greg Baird](#), [NACWA](#), [Uni-Bell PVC Pipe Association](#), [US Water Alliance](#), [Xylem](#), [Xylem Watermark](#)

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MORE IN RATES & AFFORDABILITY

Colorado activates municipal drought response plan as 2021 water forecast darkens

by **Jerd Smith** | Dec 9, 2020 | **Climate and Drought, Major River Basins, Water Supply** |



Dust clouds roll across drought-ridden fields near eastern Colorado's Lamar in spring 2013. Credit: Jane Stulp

The State of Colorado has activated the municipal portion of its emergency drought plan for only the second time in history as several cities say they need to prepare for what is almost certainly going to be a dangerously dry 2021.

Last summer, the state formally activated the agricultural portion of the plan, calling on government agencies that serve farmers and livestock producers to begin coordinating aid efforts among themselves and with growers.

Now a similar process will begin for cities, according to Megan Holcomb, who oversees the drought work for the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the state's lead water policy agency.

Holcomb said the state's decision to sound the alarm on municipal water supply came in response to requests from several cities, who believe the drought has become so severe that they need to prepare quickly for whatever 2021 may bring. Normally cities don't make decisions about whether to impose watering restrictions until the spring, when it becomes clear how much water will melt from mountain snows and fill reservoirs.

But not this year.

"Even with an average snowpack we will still be in drought in the spring," Holcomb said.

Colorado Springs, just last summer, enacted permanent three-days-per-week outdoor watering restrictions.

Kalsoum Abbasi oversees the city's water delivery system and its reservoirs. She said the state's decision to activate phase III drought planning makes sense.

"Personally I think it's a good move for the state to move forward because it will help keep these drought conditions at the forefront of the conversation," she said.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the state is now blanketed in drought, with more than two-thirds of its terrain classified as being in extreme or exceptional drought, the worst condition.

Colorado has experienced four severe droughts since 2000, but the trend has intensified with the drought of 2018 barely lifting before 2020 began seeing searing temperatures and dry weather again.

Going into 2021 soils across the state are desperately dry. As mountain snows melt and runoff makes its way to streams, a large share of the moisture will be absorbed by the thirsty landscape, leaving less for reservoirs and cities to collect.

"Soil moisture is a huge part of this story," Holcomb said. "I also think 2020 is likely the hottest year on record globally. Long-term forecasts for temperatures show January through October of next year being extremely warm again."

Colorado is divided into eight major river basins, with the four to the west of the Continental Divide feeding the bigger Colorado River Basin, which extends from the Never Summer Mountains in Rocky Mountain National Park to Mexico.

Federal forecasts for this system over the next several months have been dropping sharply. Paul Miller, a hydrologist for the Colorado River Basin Forecasting Center in Salt Lake City, said the amount of water predicted to be generated by this winter's mountain snows dropped to 5.6 million acre-feet in December, down from 6.45 million acre-feet just one month earlier.

"Even before this recent change there was cause for concern because this past year was very dry and reservoir levels fell," Miller said.

Local city water officials such as Jerrod Biggs, deputy director of utilities in Durango, said there is little time to waste.

Durango lies in the southwest corner of the state. The region has been hardest hit by the current drought and was similarly hard hit in 2018.

"All the groundwork we can lay today is worth it. Everybody hopes it's not needed. But sticking our heads in the sand isn't going to do anybody any good. It's ugly and it's getting uglier," Biggs said.

Correction: An earlier version of this article stated incorrectly that the Colorado River flows to the Gulf of Mexico.

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Fresh Water News is an independent, nonpartisan news initiative of Water Education Colorado. WEco is funded by multiple donors. Our editorial policy and donor list can be viewed at [wateredco.org](https://www.watereducationcolorado.org)

(<https://www.watereducationcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WEco-Fresh-Water-News-Editorial-Policy.pdf>)

Indy Environment: Researchers say climate change is making the atmosphere thirstier — and increasing the danger of wildfire, drought

We talk about it a lot: Across the Southwest, human-caused warming is changing the way that water falls as snow or rain, creating uncertainty around the regional water supplies we rely on.

Yet precipitation tells only one part of the story. Climate scientists expect another less-discussed variable to increase the risks of wildfires and droughts in Nevada and California over the coming decades. That variable is known as “evaporative demand,” and it’s effectively a measure of how thirsty the atmosphere is — the extent to which the atmosphere is trying to evaporate water.

That all might sound technical, but evaporative demand has real-world consequences. [In a new paper, Nevada and California researchers showed](#) how greater atmospheric thirst, mainly driven by warming temperatures, could have major implications for drought and wildfire risk.

“We saw this steady increase in evaporative demand through the end of the century,” said Dan McEvoy, a researcher with the Desert Research Institute and Western Regional Climate Center.

What McEvoy and the paper’s co-authors found was that greater seasonal evaporative demand — a roughly 13 to 18 percent increase by the end of the century — could dry out the landscape, creating conditions that are likely to increase the danger of intense fire and multiyear droughts.

Recent fires have already been linked to extreme days of evaporative demand. Those extreme days are expected to increase, the paper found, and that could result in more wildfire danger.

McEvoy said the results showed “steadily increasing extreme days.” By the late century, from 2070 to 2099, the paper forecasted a four to ten-fold increase in the number of extreme days.

The paper, published in *Earth’s Future* last month, helps to fill in a gap around predicting the effects of climate change across the state. Drought involves both precipitation trends and evaporative demand. But as the state’s [newly released climate strategy explains](#), there remains a degree of uncertainty around how climate change will affect precipitation. That’s not the case when it comes to evaporative demand, which has risen in Nevada over the past four decades.

Julie Kalansky, a co-author of the paper and a researcher based out of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego, said both variables must be weighed.

“When you think about drought just as the lack of precipitation — and without the evaporative demand — you are missing a relatively large piece of the puzzle,” Kalansky said in an interview.

The paper is predictive, but it can be valuable for planning today, researchers said. Fire, land and water managers could, for instance, work to include projections for future evaporative demand into planning about how to adapt to climate change in Nevada and in California.

Kalansky said a one takeaway from the paper was that “this drying of the landscape is really important to think about and consider in terms of planning for future adaptation and resiliency.”

As with other research into the effects of climate change, the paper primarily uses a model that assumes continued greenhouse gas emissions, what is sometimes referred to as a “worst-case scenario” for climate change. But cutting overall emissions could make the effects less extreme.

McEvoy noted that researchers ran the numbers through a lower-emissions scenario. While the increases in evaporative demand were less extreme, they were still significant. The conclusion, McEvoy said, is the atmosphere is getting increasingly thirsty, and policymakers should prepare.

Markets

UN Warns New Water Futures May Spark Bubble for Vital Resource

By [Megan Durisin](#)

December 11, 2020, 5:03 AM PST

-
- ▶ Water ‘belongs to everyone,’ UN human rights official says
 - ▶ New futures raise risk of water being treated like gold, oil
-

The United Nations said Wall Street’s new water futures risk an essential public good being treated like gold and oil, leaving the market vulnerable to a speculative bubble.

CME Group Inc.’s new contract -- which [debuted this week](#) -- could lure interest from hedge funds and banks alongside farmers, factories and utilities looking to lock in prices, said Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, the UN’s special rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. That risks a price run-up for a resource that “belongs to everyone” and is a vital tool in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The news that water is to be traded on Wall Street futures market shows that the value of water, as a basic human right, is now under threat,” Arrojo-Agudo said in a [statement](#). “It is closely tied to all of our lives and livelihoods, and is an essential component to public health.”

The new futures contract is linked to the \$1.1 billion spot water market in California, the biggest U.S. agriculture market and world’s fifth-largest economy. Supplies face increasing threats from climate change, rising populations and pollution from mining and farming, the UN said.

CME didn’t immediately reply to an email seeking comment.

READ MORE:

[California Water Futures Begin Trading Amid Fear of Scarcity](#)

[Three Billion People Live in Farming Areas With Water Shortages](#)

[CME’s First Water Futures Are Coming as U.S. West Burns](#)

[Why Water Won’t Make It as a Major Commodity: David Fickling](#)

Guest Column: 2020 Fire Year highlights import

By ThisIsReno | December 16, 2020

A plume of smoke from the 2020 Bear Fire as seen from the Feather River Canyon. Image: Trevor Bexon

Submitted by Danelle D. Harrison, USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

December is a special time of year when our thoughts turn to family and friends, and communities come together to celebrate the season. It also marks the end of the year. And what a year it was. Together, we experienced unprecedented events including a record-breaking wildland fire year in the Pacific Southwest Region.

The 2020 Fire Year ramped up quickly and during the mid-August fire siege in California, nearly 10,000 firefighting personnel were deployed to active incidents. Our neighbors in Australia, Canada, Israel and Mexico, and the U.S. Department of Defense provided hundreds of additional firefighters to assist our strained fire resources. On Aug. 18, the Northern California Preparedness level (dictated by fuel and weather conditions, fire activity, and fire suppression resource availability throughout the country) rose to 5, the highest level of fire activity and stayed there for an unprecedented 44 days.

By mid-November, approximately 10,062 fires burned nearly 4.2 million acres in California. This made 2020 the largest wildfire year recorded in California's modern history and tested the resilience of weary local, state and federal firefighting agencies. California also experienced the first large fire that exceeded one million acres.

The 2020 Fire Year also led to an unprecedented closure of all 18 National Forests in California for several weeks due to dangerous wildfire conditions. National Forest lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin were fortunate to not experience any large wildfires but did record a total of 48 fires, 38 of which were caused by human ignition.

Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership

Over the last 10 years, the USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and our many partners have accomplished significant goals of the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) by completing forest thinning and prescribed fire treatments on approximately 84,599 acres of forested lands around Lake Tahoe. Forest health is a chief focus area for the EIP, an unparalleled partnership working across physical and regulatory boundaries to achieve the environmental goals of the region in and around Lake Tahoe.

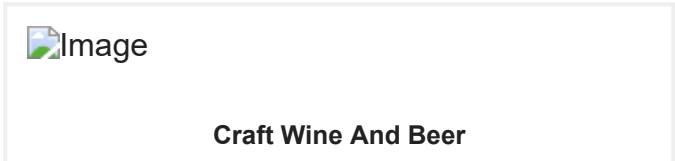
The Forest Service and our partners will continue to plan and implement projects such as the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership to increase the pace and scale of these critical ecological restoration treatments.



Thank you firefighters sign in northern California during the 2020 Fire Year. Image: Trevor Bexon

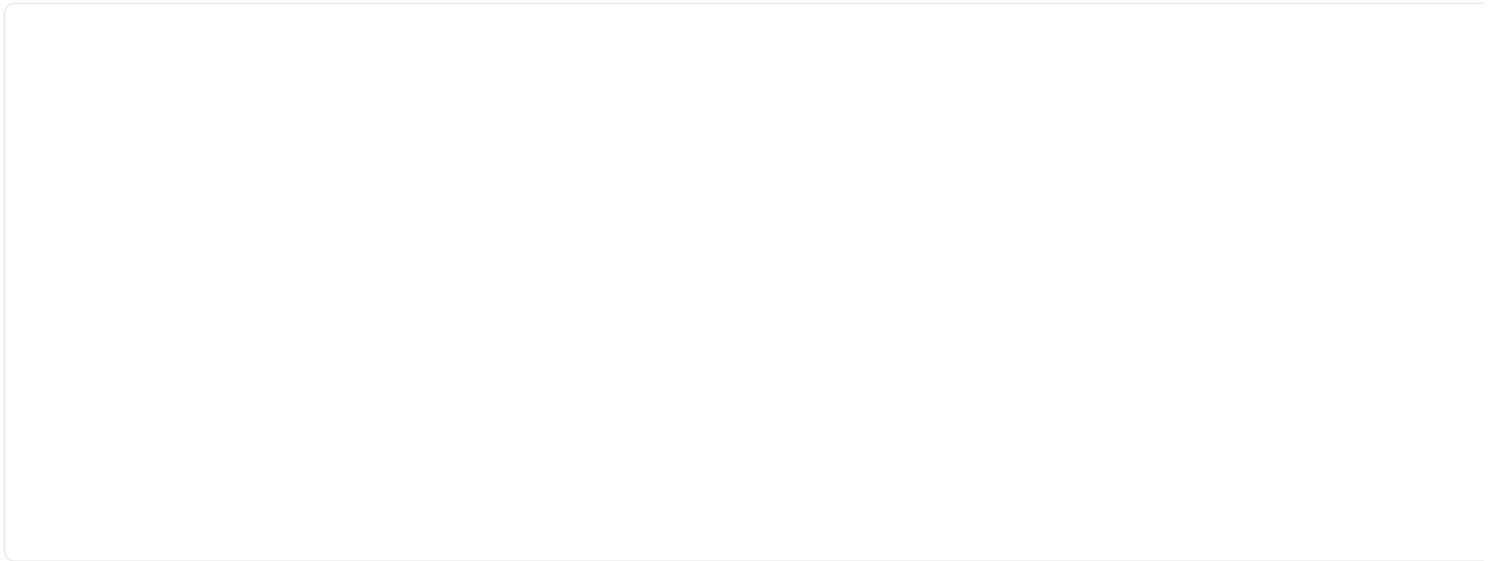
Forest thinning and prescribed fire treatments are proven to be effective methods in reducing excess vegetation, mitigating wildfire behavior, recycling nutrients back into the soil and reintroducing low-intensity fire back onto the landscape. Low intensity fire plays an especially important role in the Sierra Nevada ecosystem and can help prevent large wildfires that result in landscape altering destruction.

Both the 2007 Angora and 2016 Emerald fires were key examples of how forest thinning and prescribed fire treatments reduce the severity of wildland fires. In both cases, when out of control flames driven by fierce winds reached previously thinned treated areas of the forest, the flames dropped from the forest crown to the forest floor. Once on the ground, firefighters extinguish the flames allowing more trees to survive.



forest from Emerald Bay to Tahoe City and is taking an all lands approach to restoring the resilience of this treasured landscape.

Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership key strategies include:



- Increasing the pace and scale of forest thinning and prescribed fire treatments to reduce wildfire risks to communities and to wildlife;
- restoring meadows, managing invasive species, increasing habitat connectivity, and supporting native plants and wildlife threatened by a changing climate;
- restoring streams to reduce erosion, improving native species habitat, and increasing watershed resilience to flood and drought conditions;
- supporting and building resilience into the local economy;
- enhancing engagement with the Washoe Tribe;
- working collaboratively with land managers to meet objectives across land ownership boundaries;
- increasing smoke forecasting, agency coordination, and public outreach to minimize smoke impacts from prescribed and managed wildfire; and
- managing roads and trails for long-term stability and watershed protection.

Learn more about next steps for this innovative project and sign up for Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership project updates at <https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/california-program/laketahowest>.

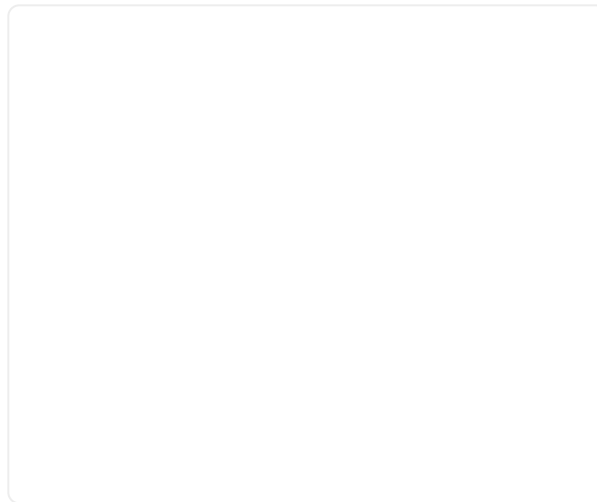
Looking Ahead



Fortunately, we can all play a role when it comes to supporting forest health projects that mitigate wildfire risk. The Forest Service and our partners will continue to plan and implement ecologically based projects. Members of the public can help reach our goals by supporting these projects and learning how low-intensity fire in the form of prescribed fire treatment beneficial for the landscape, forests will look different after treatment, and occasional smoke from prescribed fire projects worth the benefits they provide.

Homeowners can take steps to complement the work being done by the Forest Service and our partners by properly managing the vegetation surrounding private property. Homeowners are encouraged to complete and maintain defensible space improvements and discuss the importance of defensible space with neighbors.

Having defensible space around homes increases the chance that homes will survive the next wildfire. Learn how to request a free defensible space inspection from local fire districts and learn more about keeping homes safe before, during and after the next wildfire at tahoelivingwithfire.com. As we all know, it's not a matter of "if" the next wildfire will occur, it's a matter of "when."



My sincere thanks go out to our many partners for their continued support of Tahoe Basin forest health treatments and local, state and federal wildland firefighters for their hard work, dedication and tireless efforts to save lives, property and precious natural resources.

While we all wish that the 2020 Fire Year remains unprecedented, recent trends have shown that we will continue to experience significant and catastrophic wildfire in the years to come. We must all do our part as stewards of these Tahoe Basin lands, to create and sustain resilient





The ‘Climate Mayors’ Are Very Ready for a Biden Administration

During the Trump years, some cities stumbled on meeting climate goals. A change in federal leadership during the Covid recovery period could supercharge progress.

Patrick Sisson

December 14, 2020, 10:18 AM PST



St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter meets with Dr. Jill Biden in October. *Photographer: Stephen Maturen/Getty Images North America*

The climate crisis has come to St. Paul not as fire or flood but as a shiny green beetle: The emerald ash borer, an invasive insect that’s been eating its way northward in North America, is devouring a growing share of the Minnesota capital’s tree management budget. Removing dead trees could cost the city \$22 million over the next few years, Mayor Melvin Carter says. The warming planet has also manifested in the siege of potholes that afflicts the city’s roadways, since the freeze-thaw cycle now happens more often, steadily increasing municipal maintenance costs.

To help the city meet its climate action goals and do its part to combat climate change, Carter wants to double-down on bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly street design and public transit. But keeping up with falling tree limbs and buckled streets is straining St. Paul's ability to fund basic services, especially amid the economic downturn triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. And the federal government has not been very helpful lately.

ADVERTISING



“We’ve been waiting for an infrastructure week that never happened during the current administration,” Carter says.

Many other U.S. cities have been similarly frustrated in their efforts to cope with a warming world. The Climate Mayors, a network of local leaders committed to upholding the Paris Climate Agreement, saw its membership blossom from roughly 80 to a current 468 cities after President Donald Trump left the international agreement in 2017. During that time, many cities found ways to push forward sustainability and clean energy initiatives, even in the absence of federal assistance. Others, however, have failed to live up to their lofty goals. As Marty Walsh, Boston’s mayor and newly named chair of the Climate Mayors, said, “there’s no partner like the federal government.”

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The group released a statement on Friday, on the fifth anniversary of the Paris accord, to signal their expectations of what might be possible with a White House that actively helps local governments and promises to work with them. With new leadership in D.C. taking over during a critical moment, it’s “absolutely crucial,” says Climate Mayors director James Ritchotte, that the cities that have stepped up on their own during the Trump years finally have a constructive federal partner rather than an open antagonist.

“A fundamental part of what we need to do going forward, to create a green and equitable recovery, is to reorient how we invest in infrastructure,” says Ritchotte, whose group advocates for a green Covid recovery, focused on improving public health, equity, and transitioning to a zero-carbon economy. “Biden is talking about leveraging the federal budget to focus on clean energy and renewable power, just as cities are looking at buildings, transit and climate investment. There is no silver bullet, just a multi-pronged approach.”

The next six months will be key, according to Laura Jay, North America regional director for C40, an international alliance of cities focused on environmental policy. Can the Biden administration leverage the demand for a Covid recovery and, as the campaign’s Build Back Better slogan suggests, do so in a way that also dramatically advances environmental and equity concerns?

The answer hangs in part on the results of the Georgia special elections that will determine Senate control, and thus whether Biden can pass his expansive vision for \$2 trillion in climate spending during his first term. But Jay also sees possibilities in executive actions and at the agency level. “To me there’s a real opportunity to create a more formalized mechanism to get cities more integrated early into policy development and implementation, and have mayors play a more formal role within setting policy at the White House,” says Jay. “With the role mayors have played in the campaign, the door is already so wide open.”

For cities, the support and funding they get during this moment will go a long way to determining the long-term success of climate initiatives. “We’re in defense mode, taking care of the crises right now,” says St. Paul’s Carter, who notes that the city had to overcome a \$20 million shortfall from its \$636 million budget this year, reducing funding for nearly every city department, due to the Covid crisis. “We know transportation and buildings are where we can make the most climate impact. And we know the negative impacts of climate change are going to hit our low-income and communities and communities of color the hardest.”

Rescuing major U.S. transit agencies from catastrophic service cuts is one obvious transportation priority with both climate and equity implications, but it’s hardly the only one. Cities are also looking for help in transitioning to electric vehicles. In St. Paul, for example, Carter promoted the expansion of charging stations to support EV adoption, relying heavily on a Department of Energy Grant to install 70 charging stations. But he wants to establish many more; Biden’s proposed EV adoption plan, which promises to build half a million charging stations nationwide, offers hope that might be possible. “If there’s no gas stations, it doesn’t matter how nice your car is,” says Carter. “If we can’t build our charging hubs, then your electric vehicle is just something cool to show your neighbor.”

Carter, the city’s first African-American mayor, is especially sensitive to the equity gap in transportation policy discussions: He ran for city council in 2007 after his neighborhood was overlooked in the planning for a new light rail line station, even though it had one of the worst levels of transit service in the city. Carter says there needs to be much more flexibility, and a better equity focus, on transit funding. He complains that, when St. Paul asks for federal transportation dollars, it gets on a “20-year waiting list.” To create his city’s first dedicated funding for bike lanes and sidewalk improvements, the city relied on philanthropic and private sector partners.

“This ten-year period through 2030 is crucial. If changes don’t happen in this

timeframe, we're looking at a much different climate.”

Even in the best of economic times, cities can't print money or run deficits, says Ritchotte, and they can't fully self-fund major infrastructure projects like the transit expansions that voters approved in places like Austin, or the electric car-share network that St. Paul is trying to build on.

“Cities have the plans, but they need the market incentives to purchase electric vehicles, especially from an equity perspective,” says C40's Jay. “The federal government has a huge role to play in bridging the gaps between the haves and the have-nots. Cities know where it's needed. They need help paying for it.”

(Disclosure: Michael Bloomberg, the founder and majority owner of CityLab parent Bloomberg LP, is president of C40's board of directors.)

The same goes for funding to upgrade building energy efficiency. A recent Brookings study argued that new types of financing were needed to help jump-start the massive retrofit programs required to hit emissions reduction goals. Some of the most important steps Biden's team can take involve fully funding or increasing investment in programs that already work. Examples like weatherization assistance, using the community-development block grant program to fund efficiency improvements, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) “need to be uplifted and amplified,” Ritchotte says. That will magnify the impact of one Biden campaign promise, a significant investment in retrofitting four million buildings in four years.

One action the Biden White House could take is to simply raise building energy standards across the board, and help level the playing field. Establishing more federal guidelines and standards around building energy efficiency can increase investment, and as Jay suggests, steer more federal investment to communities on the front lines of climate change.

“If we say we're going to adopt stricter energy codes in St. Paul, the argument is always that it's going to be harder to do business in St. Paul,” Carter says. “There are always these trade-off excuses. Having the federal government ready to lead the way on some of these issues would take away that excuse.”

St. Paul created its own energy efficiency loan fund in 2010, now investing \$5 million in projects such as LED light upgrades and similar efforts to cut long-term energy costs. But the city is limited by financial constraints. “If the federal government made some kind of loan funds like that available, it would create a significant amount of jobs in our community, we’d cut a lot of carbon emissions from our buildings, and ideally, it would be revenue-neutral because we could pay it back with energy savings,” Carter says. “We’re saving taxpayers money over the long term. It’s a no-brainer.”

Expanding access to bonds and investments, and setting up larger green banks for infrastructure investments, could also accelerate local green initiatives. The incoming administration could push to “align transparency on climate risks and opportunities in capital markets,” says Katie Walsh, head of cities, states, and regions for CDP North America, an organization that assesses climate and environmental risk. Updating municipal bond market regulations, which haven’t been changed in decades, to better value climate risk would place more value on climate-focused investments. It’s a lever that the administration could pull to empower the financial tools that fund change.

“The next administration should rewrite the rules to incentivize the policy and financing we need to take action,” Walsh says. Phoenix, for instance, successfully issued sustainability bonds, with the help of CDP, attracting investors to help finance new water infrastructure for the fast-growing desert metropolis. “This ten-year period through 2030 is crucial. If decisions and changes don’t happen in this timeframe, we’re looking at a much different climate.”

Biden will arrive in the White House with a daunting array of crises and emergencies requiring focus and resources. But for cities trying to push climate action beyond the limitations of the Trump years, the early moves of the new administration will be the most important.

“If there’s a role for the federal government, it’s to light the way for the path ahead,” says Carter. “This is a big decision: We’re making a choice between barely keeping the lights on, or investing in upgraded lights for the future.”

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NEWS

Sisolak extends COVID-19 restrictions to Jan. 15, eviction moratorium to Mar. 31

Kristin Oh, Chelcey Adami and Brett McGinness Reno Gazette Journal

Published 11:16 a.m. PT Dec. 13, 2020 | Updated 7:26 a.m. PT Dec. 14, 2020

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak said that due to increased COVID-19 hospitalizations and the subsequent strain on Nevada's health care infrastructure, the state will continue with its current COVID-19 restrictions through Jan. 15.

Sisolak announced the extension of restrictions during a virtual press conference Sunday evening.

"As you all know, Dr. (Anthony) Fauci predicted that Thanksgiving would cause 'a surge on top of a surge' and we have every indication that's where the nation — and where Nevada — is headed at this time," Sisolak said. "According to state health officials, we are just now beginning to see the effects of the holiday in our data."

The continuing restrictions, first implemented on Nov. 22, include:

Limits on private gatherings to 10 attendees, with people from no more than two households.

Limits on public gatherings to 50 attendees, including for churches; and masks became required at all times in the company of people outside one's immediate household, including during private gatherings inside and outside.

Reservations are required at all restaurants and bars that serve food for in-person dining. Fast food restaurants and food courts are exempt from the reservation requirement. Restaurant and bar capacity was reduced from 50 to 25 percent, and there can be no more than four patrons at a table.

Capacity at gyms, fitness and dance studios is reduced from 50 to 25 percent. Patrons must wear a mask at all times, unless actively drinking. If the activity is too strenuous to be done while wearing a mask properly, people must seek an alternative. Casino capacity has been reduced from 50 to 25 percent.

Public gatherings are limited to no more than 50 people, or 25 percent of fire code capacity, whichever is less.

Arcades, art galleries, aquariums, racetracks, bowling alleys, mini golf, libraries, museums and zoos all are reduced to 25 percent capacity.

Big-box stores that have more than 50,000 square feet must have monitors at public entrances to manage capacity

A pause on adult and youth sports tournaments

Gov. Sisolak announced that he would extend the current evictions moratorium through March 31. He noted that the evictions moratorium only applied to tenants unable to pay rent, and not for other lease breaches including unlawful activity or nuisance. Missed housing payments must be repaid, however.

Sisolak also said he anticipates the first shipment of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to arrive in Nevada on Monday. The Food and Drug Administration on Friday granted emergency use of the vaccine, the Western States Panel on Sunday reviewed and signed off on the vaccine, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Sunday announced it would recommend the vaccine for people 16 years and older.

4:54 p.m. update:

Gov. Sisolak was asked to compare Nevada's less-restrictive response to COVID-19 rates in Las Vegas, with the stricter regulations put in place in Los Angeles, even though Las Vegas' per-capita infection rates were lower than in Los Angeles. Sisolak cited other increasing health crises that have been worsened by shutdowns — namely, mental health, homelessness, food shortages and drug use.

"We are in a unique position in Nevada; we are reliant on one industry: our hospitality and tourism industry," Sisolak said. "We don't have the IT industry, we don't have manufacturing in Southern Nevada; we don't have a diversified economy like other states ...

"You've got to balance the health crisis as it relates to COVID diagnosis with — as I said — the use of opioids and fentanyl; deaths have increased 50% quarter over quarter. And some of that has to be attributed to the lockdown situation and restrictions that are in place."

News: COVID-19: Nevada officials announce expansion of contact tracing app

4:43 p.m. update:

Sisolak said he had been in contact with President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris regarding COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

"We have been in discussion with their teams; they understand the difficulty we've been facing. But you've got to understand, they're (not) going to be in office for five weeks. That's a long time from now that we have to hang on for. And we need something done, and we need something done now."

Sisolak invited federal officials who didn't believe in the need for additional financial assistance to visit Nevada's hospitals, schools and businesses "to show that the need is real."

4:40 p.m. update:

Sisolak suggested further restrictions would be possible if the state's COVID-19 numbers didn't improve.

"I don't say this as a threat but as a reflection of the precarious position we are in at this time: If we cannot work together to bring these numbers under control over the next month, I will be forced to come before you again with tougher actions."

When questioned on further restrictions, Sisolak refused to elaborate.

"I don't want to get into the hypotheticals that we'd put into place. That will depend on our numbers at the time and what our situation is."

Reno doctors: COVID-19 hits crisis levels, and 'we haven't hit Thanksgiving surge yet'

4:30 p.m. update:

Sisolak praised labor leaders, major employers and government officials for cooperating on business liability and worker safety protections earlier in the year, contrasting the state's response with the response from the federal government.

"For 9 months the state has been on the frontline of this war against COVID — and for 9 months we've heard that reinforcements and aircover is on the way — 'just hang tight.' But we don't see any planes flying overhead," he said.

"Instead, every day I wake up to a new headline about how those in charge in D.C. aren't able to compromise on getting desperately needed funding to states because Republicans want business liability and Democrats want direct and flexible funding to state and local governments ...

"If D.C. needs some guidance on how to reach a compromise, look no further than Nevada."

4:24 p.m. update:

Sisolak criticized the federal government for asking for further COVID-19 restrictions from state and local governments despite not providing further financial aid, which he said would make more restrictive shutdowns viable for households.

"The problem we have is that the mitigation policy that most successfully 'stemmed the tide' in Nevada was our complete shutdown. And for the White House and feds to send (recommendations for further shutdowns) without including a big check for Nevadans — a plan for providing our state with funding to give our families a safety net in this time of great tribulation is downright out of touch and offensive."

News: Washoe hospitals, care facilities struggling with staffing as COVID cases rise, officials say
Sisolak said the lack of financial assistance is a key reason that casinos have remained open while other businesses remain shut down.

"If this has to shut down again, the state loses an estimated \$52 million a month ... in gaming tax revenue. That doesn't include room tax, live entertainment tax and more," he said.

"And when I say revenue, I mean the money the state has to give direct assistance to Nevadans in the form of schools, public and mental health, food banks, and more. It helps fund the critical services we rely on — the safety net Nevadans need. That's what's been devastated throughout this pandemic."

4:15 p.m. update:

Gov. Sisolak announced that he would extend the current evictions moratorium through March 31.

"Keeping Nevadans in their homes to slow COVID-19 was safer than them making emergency shared housing or shelter arrangements, which increases the risk of spreading COVID-19," Sisolak said. "That still remains true today."

Missed housing payments must be repaid, however.

"As I have been clear from the start: This moratorium does not — I repeat, does not — relieve renters from their obligations to pay rent to their landlords," Sisolak said.

He noted that the evictions moratorium only applied to tenants unable to pay rent, and not for other lease breaches including unlawful activity or nuisance.

4:10 p.m. update:

Gov. Sisolak said that due to increased COVID-19 hospitalizations and the subsequent strain on Nevada's health care infrastructure, state will continue with its current restrictions through Jan. 15.

"As you all know, Dr. (Anthony) Fauci predicted that Thanksgiving would cause 'a surge on top of a surge' and we have every indication that's where the nation — and where Nevada — is headed at this time," Sisolak said. "According to state health officials, we are just now beginning to see the effects of the holiday in our data."

The continuing restrictions, first implemented on Nov. 22, include:

Limits on private gatherings to 10 attendees, with people from no more than two households. Limits on public gatherings to 50 attendees, including for churches; and masks became required at all times in the company of people outside one's immediate household, including during private gatherings inside and outside.

Reservations are required at all restaurants and bars that serve food for in-person dining. Fast food restaurants and food courts are exempt from the reservation requirement. Restaurant and bar capacity was reduced from 50 to 25 percent, and there can be no more than four patrons at a table.

Capacity at gyms, fitness and dance studios is reduced from 50 to 25 percent. Patrons must wear a mask at all times, unless actively drinking. If the activity is too strenuous to be done while wearing a mask properly, people must seek an alternative.

Casino capacity has been reduced from 50 to 25 percent.

Public gatherings are limited to no more than 50 people, or 25 percent of fire code capacity, whichever is less.

Arcades, art galleries, aquariums, racetracks, bowling alleys, mini golf, libraries, museums and zoos all are reduced to 25 percent capacity.

Big-box stores that have more than 50,000 square feet must have monitors at public entrances to manage capacity

A pause on adult and youth sports tournaments

"I know the mitigation restrictions in place under the current 'pause' are devastating to many Nevadans who just want to go back to normal, who are worried about their jobs, their businesses, keeping their homes, and getting their kids back to school," Sisolak said.

"But as I've said for nine months now: We must do what we can to protect the health and safety of the public. That remains more important than ever as we experience these record numbers."

4:05 p.m. update:

Gov. Steve Sisolak on Sunday evening said he anticipates the first shipment of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to arrive in Nevada on Monday. The Food and Drug Administration on Friday granted emergency use of the vaccine, the Western States Panel on Sunday reviewed and signed off on the vaccine, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Sunday announced it would recommend the vaccine for people 16 years and older.

Sisolak said the state had conducted a "test run" of the distribution process last week to ensure smooth distribution of the vaccine once it arrives.

Original story:

Gov. Steve Sisolak will update Nevadans on the state's COVID-19 response at 4 p.m. Sunday. RGJ.com will carry live video of the press conference.

Nevada is currently reporting a 21.5 percent test positivity rate over the last 14 days and has the highest number of hospitalized patients per capita at 602 per million residents, according to the Covid Tracking Project. To date, the state has reported 186,833 cases and 2,539 deaths.

Three weeks since new Nevada COVID restrictions announced

On Sunday, Nov. 22, Sisolak announced a strengthened mask mandate and other new restrictions which began on Tuesday, Nov. 24, and remain in effect until at least Dec. 15. Sisolak at the time said the restrictions would be in place for three weeks.

"From the start of this pandemic, there aren't any decisions that don't have negative consequences. Weighing the loss of jobs and businesses versus the loss of health and lives is painful, without a perfect solution," Sisolak said during the announcement.

Restrictions announced Nov. 22 included limiting private gatherings to 10 attendees, with people from no more than two households. Public gatherings limits also were reduced from 250 people to 50, including for churches; and masks became required at all times in the company of people outside one's immediate household, including during private gatherings inside and outside.

From Nov. 22: See the new Nevada COVID-19 restrictions announced by Gov. Sisolak

Other restrictions announced Nov. 22, which remain in effect, include:

Reservations are required at all restaurants and bars that serve food for in-person dining. Fast food restaurants and food courts are exempt from the reservation requirement. Restaurant and bar capacity was reduced from 50 to 25 percent, and there can be no more than four patrons at a table.

Capacity at gyms, fitness and dance studios is reduced from 50 to 25 percent. Patrons must wear a mask at all times, unless actively drinking. If the activity is too strenuous to be done while wearing a mask properly, people must seek an alternative.

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A pause on adult and youth sports tournaments

Reno doctors: COVID-19 hits crisis levels, and 'we haven't hit Thanksgiving surge yet'



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PBS Member Stations in Reno, Las Vegas to Air 24th Annual Lake Tahoe Summit

TAHOE CITY, Calif. (Dec. 15, 2020) - The Tahoe Fund announced today that the PBS member stations in Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada will rebroadcast the 24th Annual Lake Tahoe Summit. The event occurred virtually for the first time on August 25, 2020. Hosted by U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, the theme for this year's Summit was "Resilient Tahoe." Presentations reflected the legacy of bi-state cooperation and bipartisan collaboration, while looking ahead to future environmental challenges. David Wise, Nevada native and two-time Olympic gold medalist, delivered a keynote on the importance of resilience.

The program will be seen on PBS Reno on Sunday, December 27, 2020 at 1:00pm or on Vegas PBS Jackpot! (COX 111) on Sunday, January 3, 2021 at 9:00pm.

“I’m delighted that our state’s PBS stations are broadcasting this year’s Lake Tahoe Summit,” said Senator Cortez Masto. “Protecting the lake’s fragile ecosystems, promoting economic stability and working toward a sustainable future are all crucial to the long-term well-being of one of Nevada’s greatest treasures. I hope this broadcast engages more Nevadans in this important conversation and reminds us all of the resilience of Lake Tahoe and its surrounding communities.”

“This is the first time the Annual Lake Tahoe Summit will be broadcast in its entirety on public television,” said Amy Berry, Tahoe Fund CEO. “As the organizing sponsor, we are thrilled to partner with PBS to expand the audience for this important event.”

Joined by members of Nevada’s and California’s congressional delegations and governors, as well as scientists and conservationists, the Summit focused on the success of public-private partnerships to protect Lake Tahoe and the challenges confronting the Tahoe Basin during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

The 2020 Lake Tahoe Summit included remarks from U.S. Senator Cortez Masto (NV), U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (CA), U.S. Senator (now Vice President-elect) Kamala Harris (CA), U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen (NV), Congressman Tom McClintock (CA), Congressman John Garamendi (CA), Congressman Mark Amodei (NV), Governor Steve Sisolak (NV), Governor Gavin Newsom (CA), and Randy Moore, regional forester, USDA Forest

Service, Pacific Southwest Region.

The program also featured a scientific presentation delivered by Dr. Monica Arienzo, assistant research professor at Desert Research Institute about microplastics, the “invisible invader” at Lake Tahoe.



December 15, 2020 | News Release

Error Correction Means California's Future Wetter Winters May Never Come

Correcting for the double-ITCZ bias, a persistent error in many climate models, reveals that future U.S. Southwest winters will be drier than expected

Brendan Bane, PNNL [/people/brendan-bane](https://www.pnnl.gov/people/brendan-bane)

RICHLAND, Wash.—California and other areas of the U.S. Southwest may see less future winter precipitation than previously projected by climate models. After probing a persistent error in widely used models, researchers at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory <http://www.pnnl.gov> estimate that California will likely experience drier winters in the future than projected by some climate models, meaning residents may see less spring runoff, higher spring temperatures, and an increased risk of wildfire in coming years. Earth scientist Lu Dong, who led the study alongside atmospheric scientist Ruby Leung <https://www.pnnl.gov/people/lai-yung-ruby-leung>, presented her findings at the American Geophysical Union's fall meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 1, and will answer questions virtually on Wednesday, Dec. 16.

As imperfect simulations of vastly complex systems, today's climate models have biases and errors. When new model generations are refined and grow increasingly accurate, some biases are reduced while others linger. One such long-lived bias in many models is the misrepresentation of an important circulation feature called the intertropical convergence zone, commonly known as the ITCZ <<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/703/the-intertropical-convergence-zone#:~:text=the%20intertropical%20convergence%20zone%2c%20or,and%20southern%20hemispheres%20come%20together.&text=the%20itcz%20is%20the%20band,the%20center%20of%20the%20image.>>.

The ITCZ marks an area just north of the Earth's equator where northeast trade winds from the northern hemisphere clash with southeast trade winds from the southern hemisphere. Strong sunlight and warm water heat the air here, energizing it along with the moisture it holds to move upward.

As the air rises, it expands and cools. Condensing moisture provides more energy to produce thunderstorms with intense rainfall. From space, one can even see a thick band of clouds, unbroken for hundreds of miles as they move about the region.

"The ITCZ produces the strongest, long line of persistent convection in the world," said Dong. "It can influence the global water cycle and climate over much of the Earth," including, she added, California's climate.

Doubling down on climate model bias

Many climate models mistakenly depict a double ITCZ: two bands appearing in both hemispheres instead of one, which imbues uncertainty in model projections. Scientists refer to this as the double-ITCZ bias. Variations in the wind and pressure systems that influence the ITCZ add to that uncertainty.

"There's a lot of uncertainty in California's future precipitation," said Dong, who described climate models that project a range of winter wetness in the state averaged over multiple years, from high increases to small decreases. "We want to know where this uncertainty comes from so we can better project future changes in precipitation."

To peer through the effect of the double-ITCZ bias and create more accurate projections, Dong and atmospheric scientist Ruby Leung analyzed data from nearly 40 climate models, uncovering statistical and mechanistic links between the bias and the models' outputs. The lion's share of the models they analyzed projected a sharpening of California's seasonal precipitation cycle, bringing wetter winters and drier fall and spring seasons.

Less water, more fire

Those uncovered relationships, Dong said, now cast doubt on estimations from CMIP5 <<https://www.wcrp-climate.org/wgcm-cmip>> models that projected wetter winters in the future. Models saddled with a larger double-ITCZ bias, it turns out, tend to exaggerate the U.S. Southwest's wetter winters. They also understate the drier winters in the Mediterranean Basin, which also

features pronounced wet winters and dry summers similar to California, under warming climate scenarios.



Winter precipitation includes more than just rain. Winter moisture levels influence snowpack in mountainous areas, like this California waterway, and other factors that shape climate processes throughout the year. (Photo by © 12019 | Pixabay.com)

Correcting for the bias reduces winter precipitation projections to a level that's roughly equal to California's current winters, amounting to little change and no future wetter winters. In the Mediterranean Basin, said Dong, the correction means winter drying will be intensified by 32 percent.

"An important implication of this work," said Dong, "is that a reduction in estimated winter precipitation will likely mean a reduction in spring runoff and an increase in spring temperature, and both increase the likelihood of wildfire risk in California."

Learning from climate models

Though the study's focus was restricted solely to winter precipitation, said Leung, its implications reach to all seasons.

"The implications aren't just about how wet things will or won't be," said Leung. "When people think about precipitation, they tend to think about how much rain they'll get. But precipitation has a lot of implications, like snowpack in mountainous areas, for example, and that means whatever changes we see in winter precipitation will have subsequent implications for springtime or even summertime. The impacts don't just affect winter; they'll be felt throughout the year."

The findings do not bode well for agricultural production, as over one third of the country's vegetables are grown in California soil, and two thirds of its fruits and nuts are grown on California farms, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Almonds and grapes, two especially water-hungry crops, were among the state's top producing commodities, bringing in a combined \$11.5 billion in 2019

<<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/statistics/#:~:text=the%20top%20producing%20commodities%20for,grapes%20%e2%80%94%20%245.41%20billion>>.



A scorched Northern California landscape remains after wildfire passed through the area, leaving charred vegetation. Increased risk of wildfire is one potential effect of drier winters, which PNNL scientists project for California after probing the double-ITCZ bias. (Photo by © Michael Neil Thomas |Shutterstock.com)

Over 4 million acres <<https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2020/>> and nearly 10,500 structures burned in the state's 2020 wildfire season. The fire season has grown longer, according to Cal Fire, which cites warmer spring

temperatures as one of the reasons forests are now more susceptible to wildfire.

Dong and her research partners hope the findings will better inform resource management groups as they prepare for coming wildfire seasons and plan for drier-than-expected winters.

The double-ITCZ bias is prominent in all CMIP5 climate models, said Leung, as well as CMIP6 models, the most recent generation, though the latter were not considered in this work. "If you look at the whole ensemble of models," said Leung, "you see quite similar biases."

This research was funded by the Department of Energy Office of Science Biological and Environmental Research as part of the Regional and Global Modeling and Analysis program area.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory draws on signature capabilities in chemistry, Earth sciences, and data analytics to advance scientific discovery and create solutions to the nation's toughest challenges in energy resiliency and national security. Founded in 1965, PNNL is operated by Battelle for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Science. DOE's Office of Science is the single largest supporter of basic research in the physical sciences in the United States and is working to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. For more information, visit

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It took 28 days for a Reno hospital to turn a parking garage into a wing for Covid patients. Now it has 700 beds

By [Madeline Holcombe](#), [Sara Sidner](#) and [Julia Jones](#), CNN

🕒 Updated 4:53 AM ET, Fri December 11, 2020

CNN correspondent goes inside field hospital Trump called 'fake' 03:19

Reno, Nevada (CNN) — When Rosalia Martinez heard that a Reno, Nevada, hospital was turning their parking garage into a [Covid-19](#) wing, she couldn't help but laugh at the idea.

But now she and her husband of 35 years, Luis, are both patients at Renown Regional Medical Center.

"It's scary, you know, you don't expect to go to work and be working out of a parking garage," said Janet Baum, nursing manager of the site. "We've made it a hospital, so we don't consider it a garage anymore."

As the US suffers another surge of cases, hospitals all over the country have felt the strain on their hospitals' bed capacity. Washoe County, the region Renown serves, now has 10 times the number of cases that it did a couple months ago.



It took 10 days for the hospital to convert its garage into a hospital wing.

The idea came together earlier in the pandemic and out of concern for the community, and the building went from garage to health care center in about 10 days, said hospital CEO Anthony Slonim. Now that numbers are climbing and more people are being admitted, 700 hospital beds are filling the parking spots.

Rosalia Martinez was admitted to the hospital before her husband.

"When I found out she was sick; I cried. I thought she was going to die," Luis Martinez said. Now, he is recovering from the virus as well, four beds down.

"He coughs at nighttime, I can hear him. And if I yell, he can hear me," Rosalia said. "He knows that I'm still alive."

Though coronavirus patients in parking spaces may sound odd, Luis Martinez said he feels safe there. The space is clean, and the staff is working hard to make sure they are all attended to, he said.

"I had just finished a seven day stretch in the intensive care unit. There had been patient after patient, after patient who was not surviving this illness and beyond the physical exhaustion of working a hundred hours that week, I was mentally fatigued," Dr. Jacob Keeperman, medical director of Renown Transfer and Operations Center, said. So, he posted a tweet thanking his teammates.

So, it stung when President Donald Trump and a wave of Twitter users responded to his post saying the makeshift unit was fake.

The feedback he received online made that the worst day of the pandemic for him, he said.

"This is not fake. This is as real as it gets," Slonim said. "And we take pride in knowing that we're here."

Other places struggling with lack of bed capacity have also resorted to unorthodox solutions.

when the US Naval Ship Comfort docked in New York City.

"This is like an additional hospital just floated right up to our shores, and now it's going to help to save lives," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said at the time.

In November, [El Paso, Texas, brought in an additional 10 morgue units](#) and 1,500 medical professionals -- with the help of the National Guard and inmates -- to deal with the growing death toll.

Related Article: New York's Central Park and harbor are now home to makeshift hospitals

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Pandemic could accelerate Reno's rise says longtime local developer

By [Mike Stefansson](#)

Published: Dec. 16, 2020 at 12:44 PM PST | Updated: 21 hours ago

RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - If there's a city poised to bounce-back from the COVID-19 pandemic, one longtime local real estate developer says it could be the Biggest Little City.

"I hate to say, but COVID accelerated a lot of good things happening in Reno," said Par Tolles, owner of Tolles Development Company in Reno.

Tolles, whose portfolio includes the Sticks development in Midtown and the new Village at Rancharra in South Reno, says stricter lockdowns in California led to more people coming to Northern Nevada for "a sense of normalcy". He adds many businesses have already established a hub in Reno, while commuting to bigger cities like San Jose and San Francisco.

"Where Reno was considered a satellite city for the Bay Area, it is now a satellite city for the Bay Area," said Tolles. "We are a Zoom town."

For at least the past decade, Reno's rise as a home for technology, office and other business industries has been evident. Tolles says the pandemic has only sped up the process of others discovering what Northern Nevada has to offer.

"Our tax structure is really advantageous, our open air lifestyle is advantageous," said Tolles, who moved to Reno from the Bay Area roughly 25 years ago. "I think you will see a number of very interesting companies who have thought about Reno in the past, actually make the move to Reno."

Tolles understands COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on some business owners, though none of his tenants have had to fold operations. He says avoiding a second shutdown - and the hope of another stimulus - should allow most restaurant and retail businesses to survive.

Experiential retail will always be viable, Tolles says. But he does see the new avenues of shopping and conducting business brought to the forefront by COVID-19 causing shift going forward.

"If you asked me one I'd really be worried about, it'd be malls," said Tolles. "I think dense indoor shopping that can compete with online shopping are dinosaurs that will have to evolve into a more diversified product."

And according to Tolles, Northern Nevada has proved to be on the best places in the country to adjust and diversify operations.

"We're this wonderful melting pot of gaming, university, small business, Reno-Tahoe," said Tolles. "We have this wonderful art influence because of Burning Man. Recreation."

"We're really our own unique, special quilt of different interests."

And as time goes on, Reno's only catching the interest of more people looking for a new home for their families and businesses.

"I think people have experienced Reno, who haven't in the past. They've realized what we really have to offer," said Tolles. "Whether you like it or not, we're going to get more populated, we're going to have more Californians living here."

"For everything we love and the reasons we live here, people are discovering. I think, 10 years from now, we're going to be a more vibrant and interesting place."

To learn more about Par Tolles and Tolles Development Company, head to <https://www.tollesdevelopment.com/>.

Drought Keeps Lake Mead Levels Low, But There Is Plenty Of Winter Left

By [Ron Dungan](#)

Published: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 - 6:33pm

Updated: Thursday, December 17, 2020 - 8:22am

 [Download mp3](#) (840.52 KB)



Lake Mead on the Arizona-Nevada border.

National Park Service

Last week's storm did little to ease the drought in Arizona's reservoirs. But there's still plenty of winter left.

The Bureau of Reclamation makes two-year projections, based on weather and water levels in Colorado River reservoirs, and its most recent projections have been dire.

That could set the stage for an Arizona water shortage in 2022. Snowpack in the mountains is now 69% of normal, but Patti Aaron, a spokeswoman for the bureau, says a little snow could go a long way.

"This early in the season a little bit can change that percentage quite a bit," she said, "so there's still just a great deal of uncertainty and variability right now."

The water level at Lake Mead is about 40%.

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Is Farming with Reclaimed Water the Solution to a Drier Future?

In drought-prone California, several farms are demonstrating the benefits of growing food with relatively abundant post-treatment water supplies.

BY CIRRUS WOOD ([HTTPS://CIVILEATS.COM/AUTHOR/CWOOD/](https://civileats.com/author/cwood/)) DECEMBER 17, 2020



Carolyn Phinney stands in the field at CoCo San Sustainable Farm. (Photo credit: Cirrus Wood)



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https://civileats.com/2020/12/17/is-farming-with-reclaimed-water-the-solution-to-a-drier-future/

On a Saturday in late October, Carolyn Phinney stands hip-deep in a half acre of vegetables, at the nucleus of what will one day be 15 acres of productive farmland.

“You can’t even see the pathways,” she says, surrounded by the literal fruits of her labors. The patch is a wealth of herbs, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, kale, winter squash, and zucchini. So much zucchini—fruits the size of bowling pins hidden under leaves as big as umbrellas. “Zucchini plants are supposed to be 30 inches across. Ours are 8 feet,” she says. “Everything looks like it’s on steroids.”

Phinney, pictured above, is the farmer behind CoCo San Sustainable Farm (https://www.salads4schools.org/) of Martinez, California, a farm built on reclaimed land, using reclaimed water, and started with a simple mission: to get kids to eat more vegetables.

In 2010, Phinney learned local school districts served pizza more often than salad because produce cost four times more than cheese and bread. She set out to make vegetables in her county more affordable—or free, if possible. The effort has paid off. Since May of this year, Phinney has grown and donated more than 13,000 pounds of produce to local food banks and school districts. All of it from just this half acre. Phinney is the farm’s only full-time employee, and she has worked with a team of volunteers to get the food in the ground so far.





“We could produce several hundred thousand pounds of [vegetables] in full production,” she says, referring to the 14.5 acres of bare earth and citing a time only a few years away, when the remaining land will be irrigated and planted in vegetables.

Phinney’s achievement is all the more remarkable considering the location. Prior to Phinney, Contra Costa County had used the 15-acre property as a dumping ground for excavated subsoil trucked in from elsewhere. The ground was so poor that even weeds struggled to grow there. However, as prospective farmland, the place had two big things going for it. It was cheap—Phinney leases the land for a dollar a year—and it came with a free and near limitless supply of water.

The farm is located on sanitary buffer land owned by the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (<https://www.centrialsan.org/>) (CCCSD) and is adjacent to their water treatment plant. Phinney irrigates all her crops with reclaimed wastewater, which she says is nutrient rich, safe, free, and abundant. And for Phinney, the water is the real secret to growing such healthy, high-yielding plants.

Around the same time Phinney was trying to fix school lunch, she met Mike McGill, board president of CCCSD, and learned that the county discharged around 50 to 200 million gallons of treated wastewater per day into nearby Suisun Bay. After treatment to remove solids and sterilize microbes, the water remains high in nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and micronutrients. Liquid fertility, according to Phinney, who felt the county was just dumping it.

“I said, ‘With all that free water, too bad you don’t have any free land,’” says Phinney.

As it turned out, McGill had a lead—albeit on land that was literally both dirt cheap and dirt poor—and had been looking for years to divert more of CCCSD’s wastewater away from the bay and towards projects that demonstrate the value of recycled water.

California is one of the most intensely cultivated states in the union, one where agriculture represents a \$50 billion industry (<https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/Statistics/>). But the state is also among the most water-strapped; for that reason it’s the home of the nation’s first future’s market for water (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/07/investing/water-futures-trading/index.html>) and much of the state is once again in drought (<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?CA>). Yet most of its farmers get their water from the same sources as towns and cities—aquifers, rivers, reservoirs, and snowpack—putting population and food production in competition with each other.

Wastewater reclamation could be a way to recharge aquifers and prevent saltwater intrusion in coastal cities.

Wastewater reclamation could be a way to alleviate some of that pressure and is already common practice elsewhere in the state, mostly as a way to recharge aquifers (<https://www.ocwd.com/gwrs/>) in Orange County (which reclaims and purifies 130 million gallons of water a day) and prevent saltwater intrusion in coastal cities (<https://www.montereyonewater.org/210/Castroville-Seawater-Intrusion-Project-O>). On a smaller scale, many California cities use treated wastewater for landscaping. One flashy example is the water features of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, whose lakes, fountains, and waterfalls are filled with treated wastewater (<https://sfwater.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=11707>).

The water Phinney uses falls under Title 22 of California’s Code of Regulations (<https://www.watereducation.org/aquapedia/water-recycling-and-title-22#:~:text=Title%2022%20of%20California’s%20Code,water%20is%20discharged%20and%20used.&text=Wastewater%20treatment%20s>) which, in addition to landscaping, allows for the application of sterilized, treated wastewater to agricultural crops. CCCSD’s wastewater treatment process involves a primary treatment of sedimentation, a secondary biological treatment which uses micro-

organisms to dissolve suspended organic compounds, and then disinfection with UV light. The treated wastewater is then filtered through a dual media filter and then another round of disinfection with sodium hypochlorite (liquid bleach) to produce recycled water. The resulting water is approved for all agricultural uses including root crops.



Still, few municipalities are following Phinney’s lead and using treated wastewater directly for food production. But that’s not because it hasn’t been proven safe.

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In a landmark study from the 1980s, crops of artichokes, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, and celery were irrigated with Title 22 wastewater in the Monterey Wastewater Reclamation Study for Agriculture (https://www.montereyonewater.org/DocumentCenter/View/142/Monterey-Wastewater-Reclamation-for-Agriculture-Study-PDF) (MWRSA). The study took place in Castroville, California, located in the fertile Salinas Valley. Cities and farms in the Salinas Valley both draw from the same aquifer. In the early 1970s, as evidence piled up that groundwater was being severely overdrawn between the two, risking saltwater intrusion from the Pacific, the region turned to recirculating treated wastewater.



(https://civileats.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/201216-reclaimed-water-cocosan-farm-drought-california-farming-sea-mist-3-michael-mcgill-credit-cirrus-wood.jpg)



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Michael McGill, board president of Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, holds a jar of reclaimed water. (Photo credit: Cirrus Wood)

At the end of five years, the study concluded no discernible difference in levels of bacteria, viruses, or heavy metals in the soil of crops irrigated with wastewater compared to test groups irrigated with well water. Nor were the levels any different in the crops themselves. While the study did suggest that treated wastewater could increase nitrate levels in surface groundwater, the same effect was also found in two of the fields irrigated with well water. The study did not find any negative impact to farmworker health or crop marketability.

The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District alone could deliver 20,000 acre feet of water—or about 20 million gallons—annually to farming communities.

Most of the agricultural practices suggested in the MWRSA have since been adopted in the Salinas Valley on operations such as Ocean Mist Farms (<https://www.oceanmist.com/natural-resources>) in Castroville, which uses 9,000 acre feet of reclaimed water annually on its fields of artichokes.

There have been several studies of the agricultural potential (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/j.1936-704X.2018.03291.x>) and environmental impact (<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2515-7620/ab915e/pdf>) of reclaimed wastewater in California in the 30 years since. So why hasn't the practice been more widespread in the state?

“Quite frankly, we have too much water in Northern California,” says CCCSD’s McGill. Laws regulating water use and reuse in much of the state have been determined [based] on presumed abundance. “There’s not a lot of pressure except during times of drought to reuse treated wastewater.”



That may sound odd considering the state went through several severe droughts between 2011 and 2018, and has regulated surface water for more than a century. But groundwater rights are determined by land ownership. Anyone who owns property above an aquifer can drill in, start pumping, and take as much as they want.

Which sets up a classic tragedy of the commons. Without oversight, private individuals have little incentive to conserve a public resource. Overdrawing groundwater has caused the land to sink in the Central Valley (https://www.usgs.gov/centers/ca-water-ls/science/land-subsidence-san-joaquin-valley?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects)—in some places by as much as 28 feet—and farmers have to drill ever deeper wells to sustain their livelihood. During the same severe drought, some towns went completely dry (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/apr/20/east-porterville-california-drought-bottled-water-showers-toilets>).

In 2014, then-Governor Jerry Brown signed a package of laws collectively known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/SGMA-Groundwater-Management>)(SGMA). The package set up local groundwater sustainability agencies to oversee and manage groundwater use with the goal of restoring the state’s aquifers to sustainable levels within 20 years. The state’s most overdrawn basins had until the end of January 2020 to draft their plans, which means they are still close to two decades away from sustainability.

It’s up to those local agencies to determine what counts as a sustainable aquifer, and to ensure that pumping does not exceed recharge, especially in the heavily agricultural Central Valley. Injecting treated wastewater into the aquifer is certainly one option. Another is to use it directly for irrigation instead of groundwater.

A corollary would be to import wastewater from further away, treating populated areas as auxiliary aquifers. During the height of the last drought, when the Central Valley experienced a roughly two trillion gallon annual deficit, the Bay Area was dumping roughly one trillion gallons of treated wastewater into San Francisco Bay.

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Such a scenario would mean neither cities nor farmers would have to cut back on water use. For example, CCCSD could build a 35-mile pipeline, diverting their wastewater from Suisun Bay to fill irrigation canals in the Central Valley. “To some extent, farmers would love that,” says McGill.

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Just from the CCCSD alone such a project would deliver 20,000 acre feet of water—about 20 million gallons—annually to farming communities. Albeit, such a pipeline would cost between \$2 and \$3 million per mile to build, but inexpensive when compared to the \$15.9 billion estimate for the state’s Delta tunnel project (<https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/environment/article245150370.html>).

“There are an awful lot of water practices based on abundant, free, available

water. But as the population grows, the climate changes, and not ~~it ends~~ up in the snowpack, we're just not going to have as much available."



The region hasn't embraced reclaimed water but it's not entirely for lack of trying. In 1997, the nearby Dublin San Ramon Sanitary District (DSRSD) approved plans for reinjecting treated wastewater into the source aquifer. Since both municipalities and farmland drew from the same source, groundwater reinjection was the shortest route to supplying both with much needed reserves. However, after the district invested \$24.5 million, the public outcry was so intense the plan was scuttled (<https://www.sfchronicle.com/science/article/Will-the-yuck-factor-sink-California-water-6536166.php>) in the early 2000s.

Some critics reject using water derived from sewage outright. "People think, 'Oh, poop water,'" says Phinney. But their numbers are dwindling. Orange County, which tends to be on the conservative side, has embraced the term "Toilet to Tap" (<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/toilettotap/>)," so neither Phinney nor McGill see much reason the rest of the state can't follow suit, rethink attitudes, and reuse water. In 2016, DSRSD even came back to the idea (<https://www.danvillesanramon.com/news/2016/04/01/tri-valley-water-agencies-exploring-toilet-to-tap>).

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But as for applying treated wastewater directly to crops, like Phinney is doing, there's not much in the way of opposition. Neither Phinney, McGill, nor other sources contacted for this story were aware of agencies, organizations, or individuals actively combatting the use of reclaimed water for food production.

There might not be much opposition because the state doesn't have much history with it, and very little reclaimed water goes towards agriculture. A University of California, Berkeley paper from March 2020 estimates that less than 1 percent (<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2515-7620/ab915e/pdf>) of agricultural water comes from reclaimed wastewater. For many Californians, water reclamation isn't a top shelf issue when the current system of distribution works well enough.



(<https://civileats.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/201216-reclaimed-water-cocosan-farm-drought-california-farming-sea-mist-6-crops-credit-cirrus-wood.jpg>)

Peppers growing at CoCo San Sustainable Farm.

But that could soon change. “There are an awful lot of water practices based on abundant, free, available water,” says McGill. “And, of course, as the population grows, the climate changes, and **CIVIL EATS** nize not as much water ends up in the snowpack (https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/article240400 just not going to have as much available.”

“The real bottom line here is we can’t use our water just once,” says Phinney. Fifteen acres of vegetables may be a good place to start, but it’s just a start.

Top photo: Carolyn Phinney stands in the field at CoCo San Sustainable Farm. (Photo credit: Cirrus Wood)



Cirrus Wood is a freelance reporter based in the Bay Area. Read more > (https://civileats.com/author/cwood/)



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City Council asked to issue bonds to pay for StoneGate Infrastructure

By Jeri Davis | **Published:** December 20, 2020 | **Last Updated on**

The developer behind the StoneGate development in Cold Springs is requesting the City of Reno to issue bonds to help pay for \$36 million in infrastructure costs.

For nearly two years now, the developer has been seeking to have the city approve the creation of a special assessment district and issue bonds to help pay on the front end for the installation of infrastructure, including streets, sewer and improvements to the Highway 395 interchange residents of the future development will use.

The request has already drawn opposition before being heard by the City Council at its next meeting in January.

“This is another way that developers want to be subsidized by the public for their profit-making schemes,” said Bob Fulkerson, local activist, development director and co-founder of Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.

“And they’re going to try and ring as much money out of the public as possible—and it just shows that not only is this project an environmental disaster via the leapfrog sprawl of putting a city the size of Fallon on the backside of Peavine with all of that inherent traffic and climate change inducing pollution it will cause, but, it sounds like ... they want to fleece the public financially as well,” he added.



Bob Fulkerson

There are multiple types of special assessment districts (SADs). In Reno, homeowners may be familiar with special assessments placed on their properties when the sidewalks surrounding them need to be fixed up.

When the city fixes the sidewalks, only the homeowners whose houses abut those sidewalks are assessed for their repair. SADs associated with these types of projects are common in Reno.

In this case, however, the developer is seeking the creation of a construction district—and it comes at a much higher price tag than any SAD the city has ever approved before.

When this idea was first floated in early 2019, the developer was seeking more than \$50 million in bonds issued by the city. However, according to the city’s own SAD guidelines, the appraised value of the property needs to be at least 1.5 times the amount of proposed bonds. The property in the StoneGate development therefore would only warrant the issuing of \$36 million in bonds.

The reasoning behind forming a construction district has to do with the fact that the bonds will be used to for infrastructure that does not yet exist on land where there are no individual property owners, other than the developer, to which fees may be assessed.

The bond money would pay for this infrastructure, which will eventually be owned by various government agencies. The developer would at first pay the assessments on property in the district, then any builders to which subplots of the land are sold and eventually individual homeowners in the development.

When this funding model was first proposed, City Council Member Jenny Brekhus was the lone voice on the council to oppose it.

Brekhus said that while the bonds would not be backed by the city's general fund and would be secured by land itself—which the city could foreclose on if the developer or subsequent landowners failed to make the assessment payments—the city's credit rating and ability to take on new debt in the future could be damaged if the bonds were ever defaulted on. She told This Is Reno that she will again oppose the proposal for these reasons.

Deborah Lauchner, finance director for the city, said she thought it unlikely the bonds would ever go into default.

“The risk would be if the developer just walked away from the entire development, and then ... we foreclose on the property,” she said. “And then we own property ... way outside of town that we really can't service very well. And then our recourse would be to sell it and try to recoup the money for the bond. The city itself is not responsible, but that would be where the risk would lie. We've really worked on tightening up those agreements to make the risk as minimal as possible.”

Lauchner also explained that there are additional steps that will need to be taken to get the plan approved, including forming the district through an ordinance. One part of the reason the process has taken this long, she said, is that not only is the price tag large, but the plan is also fairly novel for Reno.



Deborah Lauchner

“For Reno, we haven’t done this large scale,” she said. “This will be the largest one that [the council has] considered, and I’ve been working with them for nearly two years to get it to this point where we can take council. And then council gets to decide if they want to keep moving forward on it or not.”

While this type of funding plan is largely new for Reno—with only a few, smaller projects like work on Somersett Parkway having been financed through similar means—it has become increasingly common in Southern Nevada and in other states since the housing bubble burst preceding the Great Recession. Since time, commercial lenders for projects like the StoneGate development have become harder to find. And the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this.

“What I’m hearing is that, with the pandemic, a lot of the commercial lending—those lenders sometimes a backing off on commitments they had made pre-pandemic,” Lauchner said.

The next step toward getting the construction district plan approved will be taking the Development and Financing Agreement (DFA), which includes an appraisal and an engineer’s report on assessments, to the Reno City Council. This DFA is expected to be presented to the Reno City Council on Jan. 13.

This Is Reno reached out the developers of the StoneGate development for comment but did not hear back prior to publication of this story. This story may be updated should we receive a response.



JERI DAVIS

Jeri Davis came to Reno from rural Nevada in 2004 to study anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno. In 2012, she returned to the university for a master’s degree in journalism. She is the former associate and news editor of the Reno News & Review and is a recipient of first-place Nevada Press Association awards for investigative and business reporting. Jer



(/weather)

NEWS

Cleaning Up Trash in the Truckee River

It was a good day for a trash cleanup, for an area that desperately needs it. That would be the Truckee River near downtown Reno.

weanesday, December 23rd 2020, 1:30 PM PST by John Potter

If you haven't been down to the Truckee River Bike Path in a while, it's a sad scene, especially as you get close to downtown Reno. The Wells Underpass has become a sizeable camp out area for the homeless. Trash and debris doesn't just end up on the ground, but also in our beautiful Truckee River. It breaks your heart to see it. Volunteers pull out what they can. Group leader Grant Denton of the Karma Box Project told me volunteers and a county funded program called the River Stewards pull out "anywhere between 40 to 60 bags of trash a day."

Today (Wednesday) Grant led his Karma Box Project group knee deep into a cold, trash-filled Truckee for another cleanup, to help bring back what fishermen have always called "The Big Tricky," also known as the heartbeat of this community. As he put it, "There's not a single person who's been out here for any length of time who isn't connected to this river somehow."

Today's group of 25 thought cleaning the one area by the underpass would take an hour. That was wishful thinking: "You got layers of trash. You start pulling one layer, you got another layer underneath it and one underneath that. Its a...there's a lot of trash in there."

We saw plenty of food containers, bike parts, containers and cups. Clothing, chairs, shopping carts and cardboard. Shoes, toys and even TV sets. Grant said "You got blankets, you have bedframes, you have tires, springs. Just random, random things." At the same time, he doesn't exactly blame the homeless: "You know, we have a magical bus that drives in front of our house that takes the trash. These guys don't."



Grant's Karma Box Project gets some help. The River Stewards, a county-funded program, finds homeless volunteers and gives them incentives to clean up trash along the river for 4 hours a day. The Karma Box Project's goal is collecting over 420 yards of trash from the camps to bring back the river. As Grant puts it, "It all starts with trash, because we all have that in common, you know?"

For now, it's the best that can be done here...until the day a permanent solution can be found.

Of course the Karma Box Project is always looking for volunteers. We have a link to their Facebook page, below:

<https://www.facebook.com/karmaboxproject/> (<https://www.facebook.com/karmaboxproject/>)

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Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's newly elected chairwoman ready to face COVID-19 challenges

Marcella Corona Reno Gazette Journal

Published 6:00 p.m. PT Dec. 29, 2020 | Updated 7:47 p.m. PT Dec. 29, 2020

Janet Davis has seen the devastation that the novel coronavirus has wreaked upon her people and in other tribal communities.

On Dec. 26, Davis was elected as councilwoman for the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

“I was excited,” Davis, 60, said in a recent interview. “I will be only the second chairwoman elected to the position in all of history in our tribe.”

Davis, who currently serves on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Council, said several of its intergenerational families have been affected by COVID-19. That includes a few of her own family members, some of whom succumbed to the illness.

According to the Pyramid Lake Tribal Health Clinic, there have been a total of 171 cases, 127 recoveries and four deaths. As of Dec. 29, 40 individuals remain quarantined at home.

News: Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe rolls out vaccines for elders, essential workers

The Tribal Health Clinic has also received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and began to vaccinate elders within the community this week. That includes residents who are 70 years old or older.

The pandemic has also impacted the tribe economically after community leaders decided to isolate the tribe from outsiders as a precautionary measure earlier this year.

The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe is governed by 10 tribal council members who are elected bi-annually in December.

According to the tribe’s election results, Davis beat former Chairman Vinton Hawley, who was previously elected in 2016, in the general election by 14 votes. Hawley could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, Anthony Sampson, who is currently serving as chairman, lost the election in the primaries.

Davis will give up her seat on the council once she's sworn in on Jan. 8.

“I just want to be involved with our community and help our people do better,” she said.

“That’s my passion and always will be my passion. That’s what inspired me to run for the position.”

Davis, a former elementary school teacher for the Washoe County School District, said she’s looking forward to continuing to serve her community as chairwoman.

She previously served on the Pyramid Lake High School Board and was formerly on the committee for the Indian Health Services, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services responsible for providing health services to Native Americans.

According to a report from Indian Country Today, Four Directions Inc., a native voting rights advocacy organization, prevailed in federal court to establish polling places on the reservation just shortly before the 2016 presidential election.

According to a report from Indian Country Today, Four Directions Inc., a native voting rights advocacy organization, prevailed in federal court to establish polling places on the reservation just shortly before the 2016 presidential election.

Davis said community leaders created a plan to address voting concerns in the midst of the pandemic. Residents could drive by the voting poll, honk their horn and receive a ballot.

“It was like a drive-in,” she said. “There were 482 registered voters and 339 of them voted.”

Still, she said many tribal members who live off the reservation did not have an opportunity to vote—mostly because they’re not allowed to.

“I think maybe the process needs to change so more people feel like they’re included,” Davis said, citing her Tribal Constitution. “Only those members that reside within the boundaries of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe were allowed to vote. So, off-reservation tribal members don’t get to vote. That was part of why people were upset.”

More: For Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation, ballot collection will help its members vote Her biggest challenge was reaching people during her campaign. She said she dropped off flyers door-to-door. Still, she didn’t feel safe doing that.

“So, I had to do mail-outs, but I wasn’t able to greet people,” Davis said. “That was a challenge to reach out to people during the pandemic.”

Steven Wadsworth was also elected as vice-chairman, beating his opponent, Sherry Ely-Mendes, by 65 votes.

According to Davis, only four positions were open on the council. Edward Ely III, Harriet Brady and Nathan Dunn were all voted onto the council, each to serve two-year terms.

Davis said Natalia Gonzales was also elected to finish out the remainder of Davis' term on the council.

Davis' hope is to reunite her people.

“We have suffered from the pandemic, and we haven’t been able to gather as one,” Davis said. “Our funerals traditionally, the whole community comes out and feed, and we go through the whole process of burying our people.

“But we haven’t been able to celebrate those lives or pay our last respects to them like we normally would.”

Marcella Corona is a reporter covering local underrepresented communities in Northern Nevada. Support her work by subscribing to RGJ.com.

NEWS

With low snowpack, region could be headed into second drought year

Amy Alonzo Reno Gazette Journal

Published 3:25 p.m. PT Jan. 4, 2021

Northern Nevada and the eastern Sierra are entering the start of what could be a second drought year as area snowpack is already below normal.

As of Monday morning, snowpack was 71 to 78 percent of median in the Lake Tahoe, Truckee and Carson basins.

In the Tahoe basin, there is an average of 7.2 inches of water content at measuring sites, down from the usual median amount of 10 inches.

At Mt. Rose, there are 9.2 inches of water content in 36 inches of snow -- the median is usually 14.5 inches of water.

A series of storms this week could drop the equivalent of 1 inch of water in the mountains and boost those numbers about 10 percent, but "it doesn't make up for the fact that we are behind where should be," said Jeff Anderson, hydrologist for the National Resource Conservation Service Nevada, which measures annual snowpack.

Data collected so far this year show that precipitation totals are already 7.2 inches below average for the water year, which started October 1.

The region was 15.7 inches below average for precipitation during the last water year, meaning the region is about 22.9 inches behind normal, Anderson said. An average water year brings 44.1 inches of moisture to the mountains.

The area relies on three to four large atmospheric rivers annually to produce substantial snowpack.

"These are storms that go on one after another after another dropping 4 to 5 feet of snow," Anderson said.

The region hasn't seen one since winter of 2019-20, according to the National Weather Service.

With last year's drought, the region started drawing down on area reservoirs. Anderson said if this year stays below average and next year is also a drought year, local water users will feel the effects such as reduced water allocations or conservation measures.

Lake Tahoe is currently at 43 percent of capacity, down from 74 percent last year. Truckee Basin reservoirs, including Donner, Independence, Stampede, Boca and Prosser, are at 41 percent of capacity, down from 75 percent last year, and Lahontan Reservoir is at just 23 percent of capacity, down from 51 percent last year.

A side effect of the dry year the region has experienced so far is that a lack of rain in the mountains prior to recent snowstorms left the soil dry under the snow. In the spring, the first inch of two of snow will seep into the ground rather than into area streams, continuing to impact reservoir levels.

"If it turns out this winter is a bust, we're now in the second year of a drought," Anderson said. "Conditions are getting more serious for needing a good snowpack."

Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at aalonzo@gannett.com or (775) 741-8588. Here's how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.

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Water futures trading index elicits questions, concerns



Todd Fitchette



Wider swings of "want" and "plenty" for California water supplies could raise the attraction of future's exchange water contracts to commercial growers as they try to mitigate their water costs.

The water futures contract idea is merely a financial tool; It does not wheel an ounce of water.

Trading water futures in California is nothing new, according to those involved with water and financing. While those in the finance industry say it will bring a sense of transparency to water pricing, a longtime water manager says the realities remain to be seen.

The water futures contract idea is merely a financial tool; It does not wheel an ounce of water. Unlike other commodity futures trades, where the buyer is guaranteed the volume of commodity purchased through the futures exchange, it does not work that way with water, according to Tom Birmingham, general manager of Westlands Water District in central California.

It cannot work that way, Birmingham continues, because of the complexities of how water is conveyed and stored.

"What is different about water as a commodity is the ability to transport it," Birmingham said.

"I think about this in the context of existing futures markets, but water is not like soybeans or pork bellies in large part because the availability of water is determined by factors beyond anyone's control," he continued. "Unlike moving these other commodities, it is very difficult to transport water from one region to the other, so I'm going to be very interested to see how the trading of water futures as a commodity works."

Roland Fumasi, head of Rabobank's RaboResearch Food and Agribusiness division for North America, agrees in part.

"These futures contracts don't do anything to help growers get more water, but they..."

"These futures contracts don't do anything to help growers get more water, but they do allow growers to hedge their bets if they think the price is going to go up," he said.

Birmingham admits he's unsure how it will all work in practicality.

"There are lots of unanswered questions with this," he said.

Water exchange

According to Fumasi, the Nasdaq Veles California Water Index sets a price once a week based on an average price for water among four southern California water districts and the spot market trades of surface water. Water is traded in a per-acre-foot price with the index pricing water in 10-acre-foot shares. What this means practically, is if the index price listed is \$500, the cost of a contract is \$5,000 – or the index price multiplied by 10.

Fumasi said the exchange allows growers to protect themselves against rising water costs. In simple terms, if a grower believes the price of water six months from now, when he or she needs it, will be higher, the grower can purchase the futures contracts today then sell them in six months when the water price rises. Any net gain can then be used to pay for the water at the time of purchase.

For instance, if that \$5,000 contract for 10-acre feet of water rises to \$10,000 at the time the water is needed, the contract can be sold at the higher price with the capital gains from that purchase then available to buy the actual water, thereby "hedging" the water costs at the time of purchase. The grower is still responsible for covering the full market cost of water at the time of purchase if it is available.

That is one of the risks a buyer takes when purchasing a contract. Not only do they bet on the price going higher for water, but they also bet on its availability and the opportunity to wheel it where they need.

The 2021 growing season in California may be a good time to test this, Fumasi believes. The U.S. Climate Prediction Center points to a growing size and intensity of drought conditions in the West, including California. Barring a "miracle March" event that fills reservoirs and packs the Sierra Nevada with feet of snow, the outlook for water availability in 2021 is bleak.

The Veles Index shows that water contracts traded from January through early March 2020, hovered at just over \$200 per contract. The contract price then rose sharply through mid-June to over \$700 per contract, before retreating to about \$500 by the end of 2020.

The Veles Index can be found online at <https://www.nasdaq.com/market-activity/index/nqh20>

Controversial Lemmon Valley housing development revived, going back before Reno council

by Ben Margiott

Monday, January 4th 2021



Controversial Lemmon Valley housing development revived, going back before Reno council

RENO, Nev. (News 4 & Fox 11) — The controversial Lemmon Valley housing development known as 'Prado Ranch' is going back to the Reno City Council this month as the developer tries again to get the project approved.

[Prado Ranch is a 1,500-acre master-planned community](#) proposed by developer Lansing-Arcus LLC.

The development has faced stiff opposition from nearby residents for years, in part because it would be located in an area that [flooded during the historic winter of 2016-2017](#).

After more than a year when the project appeared to stall, the developer is expected to ask for its approval again during the [Reno City Council's Jan. 13 regular meeting](#).

It comes after the [Reno Planning Commission unanimously voted against the project](#) in Jan. 2019. Reno council members [delayed a vote on Prado Ranch in March 2019](#), opting to postpone a decision until June.

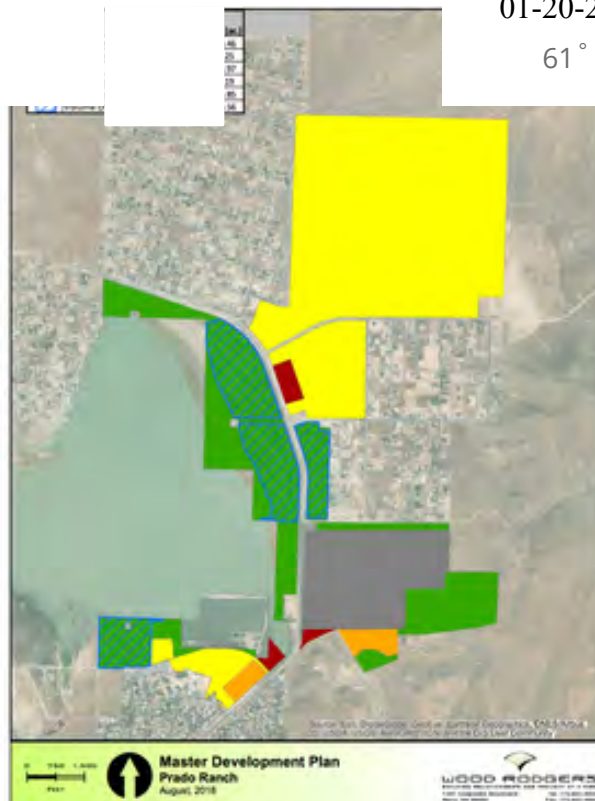
"At the applicants request, the application was continued so that they could work with RTC, Washoe and Reno on a Regional solution to the flooding near Swan Lake. We gave them until October of 2020 to come back with their changes. The applicant submitted their modified application and is now being reviewed by City Council at the January 13th meeting," city spokesman Jon Humbert wrote in an emailed statement.

He also listed some of the key changes that have been made to the project since it last appeared before council:

- Sewer from the project will flow to the Reno-Stead Water Reclamation Facility and not the Lemmon Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- The new volume mitigation proposes a minimum of 1.3:1 and up to 1.4:1, which is an increase from the previous plan of 1:1.
- Additional requirement to add pedestrian flashers at the intersection of Lemmon Drive and Lear Blvd.
- Additional street improvements on Lemmon Drive (southbound acceleration lane for left turn movements out of the project).
- Developer shall purchase or provide funding for purchase of a ladder truck.
- Ten percent of the multifamily units shall be set aside for affordable housing to low-income residents (80% or less AMI).

The Reno portion of the project is 729 acres split among 14 parcels on the east and west side of Lemmon Drive from Patrician Dr. to Oregon Blvd.

Search Site



Prado Ranch map (Courtesy: Wood Rodgers)

Lemmon Valley residents, who have spoken out against the project at every step of the process, told News 4-Fox 11 they planned to oppose it again this time.

"I've got great neighbors and it's just a nice peaceful place to live," said Holly Lenz, who lives across the street from land that would be designated for industrial use if the project is approved.

“ I'm extremely worried about that going away ... it's a scary situation.

The project would bring roughly 1,500 housing units, including single-family homes and apartments, to the area. Lansing-Arcus LLC's plans include widening Lemmon Drive to four lanes and adding a traffic signal at Patrician Dr., among other infrastructure improvements.

But perhaps the biggest concern from neighbors is about flooding. Four years after the 2017 floods, reminders of that winter remain. HESCO barriers are still standing along Lemmon Drive, [Search Site](#)

"Where's all that runoff going to go? It's all going to go into that lake (Swan Lake) and right back into families' homes," said Danny Cleous, whose house flooded in 2017.

Lansing-Arcus LLC has donated \$1,000 to Councilwoman Bonnie Weber. Lansing Industries, Inc. donated \$250 each to councilmembers Oscar Delgado and Neoma Jardon, [according to Nevada Secretary of State records](#).

The virtual Reno City Council meeting is planned for Jan. 13 at 10 a.m. [Click here to learn more and submit public comment](#).

MORE TO EXPLORE

All Washoe County Schools on 2-hour delay on Thursday

Former Washoe County Judge, Sparks City Attorney Steven Elliott dies

Toilet paper flying off shelves as COVID-19 cases surge in Washoe County

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Proposed project could result in big changes to Steamboat Ditch

14 miles of canal would be converted into pipeline



This is the route of the canal that may be converted into pipeline. (staff)

By [Ben Deach](#)

Published: Jan. 5, 2021 at 5:29 PM PST



RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - Steamboat Ditch could be looking a lot different soon. There are discussions to possibly convert it into a pipeline.

"The canal was built in the 1880s," said Mike Barnes who lives adjacent to the creek. "There is a part of Reno's history that if they encapsulate in concrete pipes would be gone forever."

That is indeed part of what is being [proposed](#) by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"The goal here is to target the potential for flooding from the Steamboat Canal because it is higher than some of the properties there," said Ray Dotson, a state conservationist.

Part of what the proposed project calls for is replacing about 14 miles of open canal with pipelines. A move to prevent flooding in the area.

Barnes doesn't feel that is a real concern, as he's lived right next to the canal for six years, and says it has only even come close to flooding once.

"Right now what we have is an opportunity to make a plan to determine the steps to move forward to help mitigate some of that flood risk," Dotson added.

This project is in its earliest stage, and you can still have your voice heard regarding the proposal until January 15th. [Click here](#) to find out more.

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As COVID-19 cases rise,
so can our
community.



Home

Nevada receives \$1 million in grants to improve water quality, reduce pollution

Submitted by Jeff Munson on Tue, 01/05/2021 - 11:05am



File photo by Carson Watershed Subconservancy

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

CARSON CITY — The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection announced Tuesday that it has received \$1 million in Clean Water Act grant funds provided by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency that will be used to complete 11 projects to reduce “nonpoint source pollution” and improve water quality across the state.

Nonpoint source water pollution degrades Nevada’s water resources when rain, snowmelt and irrigation water flows over developed or disturbed land, carrying with it pollutants including oil, sediment, pesticides, bacteria and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus which can contribute to excess algae growth. This polluted water makes its way into Nevada’s waterways either directly or through storm drains, and can impact overall water quality conditions.

Projects selected for Nevada’s 2020 Clean Water Act grant funding include the following:

Northern Nevada: Streambank stability restoration projects on the Carson River in the Carson Valley by the Carson Valley Conservation District and Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada. Construction of stormwater control measures in the Incline and lower Kingsbury areas by Washoe County and TRPA to decrease roadside sediment from entering Lake Tahoe. Implementation of erosion control and stabilization measures by the City of Reno on Chalk Creek to improve the quality of stormwater conveyed to the Truckee River.



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Featured Events

Artist Mark Brandvik exhibition 'Relaunch' at CCAI Courthouse Gallery.

Repeats every week until Thu Jan 28 2021 .

October 21, 2020 (All day)



The Capital City Arts Initiative presents its exhibition, "Relaunch", by artist Mark Brandvik at the CCAI Courthouse

Gallery. The exhibition will be in the gallery from October 2, 2020 – January 28, 2021.

Sertoma winter coat drive barrels in Carson City, Carson Valley brim over with donations

Repeats every week until Sun Jan 31 2021 .

December 10, 2020 (All day)



The Sertoma Coat Drive is in full operation for its fourth year of collecting and distributing clothing to the people in the community who

are without warm outerwear. With 19 blue barrels in Carson Valley and 7 in Carson City, everyone who wants to donate new and gently used coats, blankets, and warm outerwear is finding a donation spot.

Notice of Public Discussion of possible Carson City grant applications

January 14, 2021 - 9:00am

Notice is hereby given that Carson City will conduct a public meeting and information

Southern Nevada: Implementation of education and outreach initiatives by the Southern Nevada Water Authority to help inform residents how to reduce nonpoint source pollution from entering their water sources. Coordination and collaboration with the Virgin River Coalition to implement their restoration plan to improve water quality and wildlife habitat in the Virgin River.

"The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is excited to leverage Clean Water Act Section 319 grant funding to make important investments in community outreach and on-the-ground projects enhancing water quality for the benefit of all Nevadans," said Birgit Widegren, Supervisor of NDEP's Nonpoint Source Program. "We look forward to engaging with communities to protect our precious water resources by reducing the amount of pollution that enters our waterways. Small steps can add up to big improvements to Nevada's streams and rivers, and we thank the EPA for continuing to support NDEP's Nonpoint Source Program with these critical annual grant funds to help ensure the long-term health and vibrancy of Nevada's waterways."

NDEP's 2020 Annual Report for the Nonpoint Source Management Program highlights the accomplishments of the program during the previous year. Twenty-four ongoing and completed water quality improvement projects resulted in significant reduction of pollutants entering Nevada's waterways. [Click here](#) to view the report.

Each year, Nevada receives Clean Water Act grant funding from the EPA to administer the Nonpoint Source Program. NDEP releases an annual competitive Grant Funding Opportunity to award funds to qualifying counties, conservation districts, regional agencies, and nonprofit organizations for water quality improvement projects.

Carson City 2020 agency benefit California carson Carson River City Clean collaboration community Community, conservation construction county Environmental funding grant funding grants Growth Habitat Health help Investments irrigation Lake Nevada News Nonprofit Northern Nevada oil Opportunity Outreach pesticides pollution program Quality rain regional Restoration stability state stormwater Support tahoe trpa Truckee truckee river U Washoe Washoe Tribe water water flows Water Quality Carson Valley Education Lake Tahoe reno wildlife

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Top Stories

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Nevada Congressman Mark Amodei votes against article of impeachment

Nevada Politics - Wednesday, January 13, 2021 - 1:58pm



Press Release from Congressman Mark Amodei

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Mark Amodei (NV-02) today released the following statement after voting against the impeachment of President Donald J. Trump:

Red Cross seeks volunteers to serve Carson City and surrounding communities

Community - Wednesday, January 13, 2021 - 1:36pm



American Red Cross of Northern Nevada

RENO — The American Red Cross of Northern Nevada is seeking volunteers to join its Disaster Action Team, serving Carson City and surrounding communities in the Carson Valley and other areas of Douglas County.

COVID-19 vaccine now available for Quad County, Carson City seniors 70 and older

News - Wednesday, January 13, 2021 - 11:57am

Carson City Health and Human Services

Carson City Health and Human Services (CCHHS) is continuing to move forward with COVID-19 vaccinations in the Quad-County Region based on the current federally approved COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance set by the State of Nevada. CCHHS is now offering COVID-19 vaccines to Quad-County residents age 70 years and older.

session on Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. (All meetings will be online, please see directions below), in order review the application process for the COVID-19, CDBG-CV, II & III, State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) Program and to solicit citizen input on possible activities to be included in the application.

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to convene 'Clean Cars Nevada' virtual listening session

January 14, 2021 - 10:00am

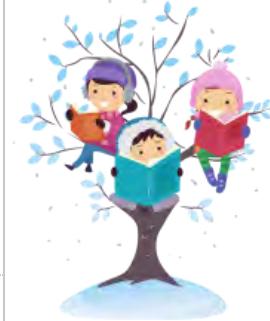


The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection announced plans to

convene a virtual listening session on Clean Cars Nevada, an initiative that would provide Nevadans with more choices for low and zero emission passenger cars and light-duty trucks offered at dealerships across the state beginning in 2024.

Carson City Library hosts Virtual Program: Family Story Time

January 14, 2021 - 11:30am



Join us for weekly themed stories and crafts. Craft instructions and additional resources, including activities for older children who may be at home, will be included. For PRE-K (children not yet in elementary school) and families. To register, [go here](#).

Nevada Humanities to Feature Programs Around Civic Engagement in 2021

January 14, 2021 - 4:00pm



Nevada Humanities has been awarded \$50,000 by The Federation of State Humanities

Councils and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of a new national initiative, Why It Matters: Civic and Electoral Participation, which will explore civic participation as it relates to electoral engagement in a multivocal democracy.

Carson City Soroptimist seeks Ruby Award nominations

Repeats every week until Fri Jan 29 2021 .

January 4, 2021 (All day)



Soroptimist International of Carson City is

seeking nominations for its annual Ruby Award. The Soroptimist Ruby Award honors women who, through their professional or personal efforts, are making a difference in the lives of women or girls in the areas of health, education, and economic and social development and inspires and encourages other women.

WATER SERVICES



Water Use Calculator: A New Water Conservation Tool

JANUARY 5, 2021 9:00 AM

Phoenix Water's new water usage calculator is a tool to help residents get a better understanding of day-to-day water consumption. Showers, dishwashing, laundry, toilet flushes, outdoor landscaping, and pools contribute to the resident's daily water use.

"Water conservation has always played a critical role in Phoenix's water resource planning. As we prepare for a hotter, drier future, water conservation will be even more important for our city's resiliency and sustainability. The water calculator is an excellent resource to add to our water conservation efforts," said Councilwoman Thelda Williams, chair of the Transportation, Infrastructure and Innovation Subcommittee.

To get started, residents can visit [Phoenix.gov/WaterCloud](https://phoenix.gov/WaterCloud) and click on the Home Water Usage Calculator. That calculator makes it easy to enter information about the household, such as family size, type of landscaping, age of the home, length of the average shower, and more. The calculator compiles a resident's optimal monthly water usage into a detailed report tailored to the household.

In the report, residents can view monthly and annual water usage breakdown (in gallons), as well as graphs that highlight indoor versus outdoor water usage. Residents are encouraged to use a recent City Services bill to input actual usage for a more accurate comparison. The calculator produces an estimate, and actual usage may vary.

Phoenix Water's water usage calculator is one of the 14 water conservation measures recommended by the Water Conservation Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) and adopted by the Phoenix City Council to maintain Phoenix's legacy as a water conservation leader.

"Water is the foundation of public health, which makes water resource planning critical to desert living. This free tool allows customers to develop a plan for their indoor and outdoor water use. We must continue to implement new tools to encourage water conservation in an effort to preserve our water supplies and prepare for the future," said Councilwoman Laura Pastor.

The Committee convened from May 2019 to Dec. 2019 to identify water conservation measures around three focus areas, including landscape requirements and guidelines, codes and enforcement, and education and outreach. The Committee was co-chaired by Councilwoman Williams and Councilwoman Pastor and comprised of citizens from the community with water expertise in the non-profit, private, and public sectors.

Additional resources are available to help resident's conserve water and save on their City Services bill:

- [Request free water-saving resources](#)
- [Sudden water bill spike? Check for leaks](#)
- [Visit Phoenix Water's Water Cloud digital education page](#)
- [Get low water use plant ideas for the landscape](#)
- [Watering plants the right amount? Check out this handy guide](#)
- [Find over 100 water-saving tips and more](#)

Story contributed by: Gina Conrow

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Related Social Media Hashtags and Handles: [@PHXWater](#) [#PHXWaterSmart](#) [#PHXWater](#)

Keywords: [Phoenix Water](#), [PHX Water Smart](#), [Water Use Calculator](#)

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Homeless community helps keep Washoe County clean

by Tony Phan

Wednesday, January 6th 2021



One coordinator drives up with a golf cart at 9am to provide volunteers with vests and all the equipment to pick up trash.jpg

RENO, Nev. (News 4 & Fox 11) — Washoe County is currently funding the River Steward Program, which aims to get the homeless community to help pick up trash along the Truckee

┌

Every weekday a few volunteers show up to Brodhead Memorial Park at 9 a.m. to start picking up trash. Over

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40 VOLUNTEERS HAVE COME OUT TO PICK UP TRASH OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS.

Grant Denton, creator of the Karma Box Project and the head of this program says they've collected around 2,500 gallon bags of trash.

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“ The idea is there’s this aggregation of marginal gains where we’re slowly every day, improving and moving them to being better versions of themselves. We’re moving them to where they need to be and one way to do that is to identify these individuals and also give them a little bit of purpose and create a structure of belonging.

Denton says there's 238 encampments from Lake Street to Galetti Way, which means a lot of trash to collect.

The program is a good way for the volunteers to have a conversation with coordinators to help them get their lives back.

It pointed in the right direction on where to get a job, how to get an I.D or social security

Santiago Cortina, a volunteer, is currently living right next to the river but believes this program

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“ It gives a better image of people who are homeless. We’re not just all dirty and just want to live in filth. There’s a lot of us out here that got goals and want to stay clean and get clean and live in a clean environment again. You know what I mean? Be independent.

Cortina has been homeless for a year now after losing his job. He tells News 4-Fox 11 his goal is to get into a rehab center to get clean.

Right now they're asking for the community's help by donating more trash bags to supply the volunteers. To do so, reach out to Grant Denton at grantadenton@gmail.com.

MORE TO EXPLORE

Reno Police arrest sexual assault suspect from 1998 cold case

Man arrested for murder after police find body in Sparks home

Man sentenced to 10 years in prison for trafficking a 23-year-old woman

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Man Who Predicted 2020 Crash 45 Days Early Issues Next Major Warning

[The Legacy Report](#)

VOICES | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Cost of Steamboat Canal project far outweighs benefits | Jerry Wager

Jerry Wager

Published 8:00 p.m. PT Jan. 7, 2021

Subscribe: Read local news and views with a 99-cent subscription to the RGJ

This opinion column was submitted by Jerry Wager, a retired environmental program manager living in Reno.

There is a proposal to convert the Steamboat Canal Waterway that has been here since the late 1800s to either half or fully enclosed piping starting up at Caughlin Ranch and through to south Reno. They propose to leave the rural portion open and only destroy the urban portion. This beautiful historic Reno waterway is utilized by many in our community for walking, jogging, dog-walking and biking.

It is also habitat to numerous wildlife species. Deer, bears, hawks, ducks, quail, songbirds, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons and many more species are reliant on the shelter and the water the ditch provides. Besides animals, many types of willow, cottonwood trees and other types of vegetation would not survive without the water. Moving to a closed piping would ruin this lush habitat in our high desert region.

I listened to the Dec. 8 scoping meeting on this project and the rationales presented are hard to believe. The ditch and its trail have become a real neighborhood amenity, which this project proposes to destroy. At a time when many cities across America are "daylighting" (uncovering and restoring channels), this project proposes to do the opposite for very weak objectives. They talk about "benefit": improving water quality, water conservation, flood control, for example. Let's dissect some of these.

If you live along the ditch, as we do, you know the ditch runs clear almost all the time. The only real pollutant loading is sediment, which occurs when the ditch is turned on in spring. Sand and finer sediments deposited during the previous winter, spring and summer have dried and are easily transported downstream. This initial loading disappears in a matter of days. The Steamboat Ditch Company and Natural Resources Conservation Service don't appear to have worried about this minor problem before. If this was a real issue, they could divert the initial flow of the ditch into stormwater basins they talk about constructing as part of the project. Let's also recognize that sediment-loading occurs in every major runoff event (storm) on every tributary and is part of the natural process of erosion and deposition in watersheds. Without empirical evidence and long-term water quality monitoring (both chemical and biological), this so-called problem doesn't hold water.

They also talk about "fish and wildlife improvements" associated with the dam/diversion on the Truckee River. If kayakers are an issue, this is simply and cheaply solved by constructing a small take-out above the dam, with a short trail to a put-in below. I also suspect that there are already excellent fish populations above and below the dam. The environment they propose to destroy is far more important to wildlife in our urban area.

They also mention water conservation as a benefit. I suspect this is another red herring. How much actual water is lost through evaporation and seepage? A lot, a little (in comparison with the total annual flow)? How much is this water worth? Who will sell it to whom? How much will the handful of agricultural landowners benefiting from all this taxpayer-funded project pay for this "rescued" water? If we could do an honest cost-benefit analysis on this project, we'd find the public is being taken for a ride, especially in light of the value of the amenities being lost.

Then there's the issue of flood control. I've lived on the ditch for over eight years. With the exception of one storm (I think it was in February 2016 or 2017), I haven't seen the ditch go out of bank. I'm talking about the area I regularly walk from Skyline to the western end at Susileen Drive. Even that storm produced minimal erosion, with small overflow traveling across the trail and down into the ravines in a handful of locations. There was no effort to repair these spots, I should point out. Here again, I suspect that minor, isolated problems of flooding and/or wet basements are being used to have us believe the problem is widespread. Such problems could and should be treated individually.

I noticed the project manager brought up the issue of historic preservation in regard to a small dam tender structure. If the company is truly concerned about the ditch's historical importance, then maybe erecting signs at trail entrances about the thousands of Chinese laborers who hand-dug the ditch would be more appropriate.

Lastly, the project engineer mentioned that because of property owners (whose notification about the project he seemed hesitant about) held easements, the entire trail adjacent to the ditch might be abandoned. He also stated in answer to a question that only an Environmental Assessment (versus an Environmental Impact Statement) would be needed as the project would cost less than \$25 million, so obviously they have already made a total project cost estimate. However, if we can force an honest cost-benefit analysis of this project, valuing what is to be lost; it might be very hard to justify its going forward. Many such projects, funded by PL 566, benefit a small number of landowners, as in this case. And as long as they fly under the radar they can make it to construction. Let's hope this isn't one of them.

I suggest informing all property owners along the ditch, as well a putting small informational signs at trail entrances, so those who just walk and run on the trail everyday know what's being proposed.

Have your say: How to submit an opinion column or letter to the editor

LATEST HEADLINES

Pure Water Monterey project bolstered by federal grant

Moves to push ahead recycled water project expansion appear to falter



The Pure Water Monterey regional treatment plant. (Courtesy Monterey One Water)

By **JIM JOHNSON** | jjohnson@montereyherald.com | Monterey Herald
PUBLISHED: January 8, 2021 at 2:44 p.m. | UPDATED: January 8, 2021 at 2:45 p.m.



Recognizing the groundbreaking nature of the Pure Water Monterey recycled water project, the U.S Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation has awarded the project a \$15.5 million grant.

Under its WaterSMART initiative, which seeks to invest in technologies designed to enable "broader scale use of recycled water to supplement supplies," the federal Bureau of Reclamation awarded the local recycled water project nearly 40% of its \$40 million in grants awarded after a competitive review process, according to a release.

The release also noted that the grant funding was "prioritized for projects that develop and supplement urban and irrigation water supplies through water reuse, thereby improving efficiency, providing flexibility during drought or water shortages, and diversifying water supply."

The Pure Water Monterey project, which has provided potable water for extraction and use since the summer, treats a variety of local wastewater to drinking water standards before pumping it into the Seaside basin for later extraction and use on the Monterey Peninsula. It also facilitates collection of wastewater sources for expanded agricultural irrigation, removal of pollutants from waterways and improvement of local river habitats.

The \$140 million project is committed to provide 3,500-acre-feet per year in potable water, a capacity it expects to reach by the end of the year after an additional injection well is completed by November. The project has injected more than 700 acre-feet into the basin that is eligible for extraction so far after injecting a 1,000-acre-foot reserve starting early last year.

It is considered a key element of the larger Monterey Peninsula Water Supply project, which currently includes California American Water's proposed desalination plant and is aimed at developing a new portfolio water source to offset the state-ordered pumping cutback from the Carmel River aquifer.

Backed by Monterey One Water and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, the project has now received a total of \$39.35 million in grant funding representing nearly 30% of its design and construction costs. Monterey One Water spokesman Mike McCullough said the latest grant funding, when it's eventually received, will go into the Pure Water Monterey account and could be used to help pay off a low-interest loan for the project or for future capital costs, and some could go to partly reimburse the water management district for its contribution to the project.



“Obtaining grant funding is challenging but an important effort that directly benefits our community,” Monterey One Water board chairman Ron Stefani said. “We are grateful for the Bureau of Reclamation’s support of our innovative and multi-beneficial project.”

Water management district board chairman Alvin Edwards said the district “appreciates the hard work of staff at both agencies to build relationships with federal staff and for telling the Pure Water Monterey story in a compelling way. We sincerely thank the Bureau of Reclamation for their commitment and support for helping our community develop a key water supply project.”

U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, was among a number of local elected officials, agencies and organizations offering letters of support for the grant bid, and praised the initiative.

“Understanding the importance of the Pure Water Monterey groundwater replenishment project for the water needs of the Monterey Peninsula, I was pleased to offer my support early on for potential Title XVI funding,” he said. “Such a significant amount of federal funds will not only help further the development of the project, it will also further our goal for sustainable water sources for our home.”

The grant funding announcement comes as a couple of local elected officials’ attempts to shake loose a proposed 2,250-acre-foot expansion of the recycled water project, which has been stalled since last year, appear to be falling short of their goal.

During a special Del Rey Oaks City Council meeting Thursday, a split council voted 3-2 against Mayor Alison Kerr’s attempt to replace Councilman John Gaglioti with new Councilwoman Kim Shirley on the Monterey One Water board, choosing new Councilman Scott Donaldson instead. Gaglioti cast a key vote against certification of the recycled water project expansion’s environmental review document, calling it “fatally flawed,” while Shirley vowed to immediately vote to certify the document and allow the recycled water project to move ahead. Donaldson has not expressly said how he would vote on the issue.



Earlier in the week, District 2 Supervisor John Phillips said he wanted to keep his current seat on the Monterey One Water board even as new Board of Supervisors Chairwoman and District 4 Supervisor Wendy Root Askew made a bid to replace Phillips with herself on the board. Phillips also voted against certification of the expansion project’s environmental document, while Askew has said she supports the proposal. In her latest recommendation, Askew recommends leaving Phillips on the agency board with her serving as an alternate. A final decision on the county board’s representative to the Monterey One Water board is expected Tuesday next week.

A single vote could reverse the current 11-11 weighted vote deadlock on the Monterey One Water board regarding certification of the expansion project environmental document. Agency staff has stopped working on the expansion proposal since the certification denial vote last year.

A water management district analysis has found that Pure Water Monterey with the expansion could provide an adequate potable water source to offset the river aquifer for at least the next quarter-century.

Tags: [Newsletter](#)



Jim Johnson | Reporter

Jim Johnson covers Monterey County government and water issues for the Monterey Herald.

jjohnson@montereyherald.com

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By Mazda



Annual EPA grant will be used for water projects



Henry Brean/Las Vegas Review-Journal Da-ek Dow Go-et, left, and Wheeler Peak reflect in the waters of Stella Lake at Great Basin National Park on Sept. 1, 2019. Flooding from snow melt has closed a campground in the park.

Staff Report

January 8, 2021 - 8:35 am

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The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection on Tuesday announced that \$1 million in Clean Water Act grant funds provided by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency will be used to complete 11 projects to reduce “nonpoint source pollution” and improve water quality across the state.

Nonpoint source water pollution degrades Nevada’s water resources when rain, snowmelt and irrigation water flows over developed or disturbed land, carrying with it pollutants including oil, sediment, pesticides, bacteria and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which can contribute to excess algae growth. This polluted water makes its way into Nevada’s waterways either directly or through storm drains and can affect overall water quality conditions.

In Southern Nevada, projects selected for Clean Water Act grant funding include the implementation of education and outreach initiatives by the Southern Nevada Water Authority to help inform residents how to reduce nonpoint source pollution from entering their water sources and coordination and collaboration with the Virgin River Coalition to implement their restoration plan to improve water quality and wildlife habitat in the Virgin River.

Projects to get grant funding in Northern Nevada include streambank stability restoration projects on the Carson River in the Carson Valley by the Carson Valley Conservation District and Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, construction of stormwater control measures in the Incline and lower Kingsbury areas by Washoe County and TRPA to decrease roadside sediment from entering Lake Tahoe and implementation of erosion control and stabilization measures by the city of Reno on Chalk Creek to improve the quality of stormwater conveyed to the Truckee River.

“The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is excited to leverage Clean Water Act Section 319 grant funding to make important investments in community outreach and on-the-ground projects enhancing water quality for the benefit of all Nevadans,” said Birgit Widegren, supervisor of NDEP’s Nonpoint Source Program. “We look forward to engaging with communities to protect our precious water resources by reducing the amount of pollution that enters our waterways.

“Small steps can add up to big improvements to Nevada’s streams and rivers, and we thank the EPA for continuing to support NDEP’s Nonpoint

Source Program with these critical annual grant funds to help ensure the long-term health and vibrancy of Nevada’s waterways.”

Each year, Nevada receives Clean Water Act grant funding from the EPA to administer the Nonpoint Source Program. NDEP releases an annual competitive grant funding opportunity to award funds to qualifying counties, conservation districts, regional agencies and nonprofit organizations for water quality improvement projects.

NDEP’s 2020 Annual Report for the Nonpoint Source Management Program highlights the accomplishments of the program during the previous year, as 24 ongoing and completed water quality improvement projects resulted in significant reduction of pollutants entering Nevada’s waterways. To view the annual report, visit [https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/water-nonpoint-docs/SFY_2020_NV_NPS_Annual_Report_\(1\).pdf](https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/water-nonpoint-docs/SFY_2020_NV_NPS_Annual_Report_(1).pdf)

Washoe County Health District transitions to Tier 2

By [Abel Garcia](#)

Published: Jan. 9, 2021 at 7:43 PM PST

RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - The Washoe County Health District administered more than 1,000 vaccines on Saturday as they have transitioned into Tier 2, starting off with educators within our district.

Exposure to too many people is just one of the many reasons Sue Munoz, an educator in Washoe County rolled up her sleeve and took the shot. "I do have a high community exposure just day in and day out," Munoz said. She added, its protection not only for herself but for those that she's in contact with.

"I think everyone wants to feel comfortable and safe if they are out there teaching and having that daily contact with the community," Munoz said.

Following the states COVID-19 Vaccine Playbook those more at risk in the Tier 2 category are educators, which gives them priority to get vaccinated and on Saturday more than 500 of them did. Scott Oxarart, Communications Manager said we all know the importance of teachers and educators in this community.

"Once we knew we had the available resources to move forward, we worked with the school district and charter and private schools to make sure we got them access," Oxarart said.

For Munoz, it wasn't an immediate yes. She was aware that the choice was up to her and the decision for you is in your control.

"I was very wary when they first talked about it because of how fast the vaccine came about and I thought I would wait, but once it came about I wanted to do it," explained Munoz.

The health district said the most efficient way to find out when you are next is staying in contact with your employers.

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Travel // Tahoe

Lake Tahoe considers 'controversial' herbicides for the first time in fight against aquatic weeds

Julie Brown

Updated: Jan. 13, 2021 12:43 p.m.



Officials have identified the Tahoe Keys as the primary source for an aquatic weed infestation that is spreading into Lake Tahoe.

Courtesy of League to Save Lake Tahoe

Invasive aquatic weeds are spreading in Lake Tahoe, and officials are considering the first-ever use of herbicides in Tahoe to contain the problem, which stems from a man-made lagoon and marina called the Tahoe Keys.

Last fall, on one of the last warm days of the year, I pulled into the Tahoe Keys, a quirky subdivision that was built in the 1960s on wetlands in South Lake Tahoe. The dead-end streets and cul de sacs felt like a maze of fingers stretching between water canals and lagoons, like if Venice was a suburb.

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There are 1,500 homes in the Tahoe Keys. Many of the homes have piers stretching from their backyards into waterways that connect to Lake Tahoe. Before these homes and canals were built, this land was full of meadows and marshes that made up the largest wetland in the Sierra Nevada.

The wetlands once played a fundamental role to filter sediment and pollution from a major tributary into Lake Tahoe, the Upper Truckee River.

Now, officials have identified the Tahoe Keys as the “primary source” for an infestation of weeds that has already started to march into Lake Tahoe and threatens to spread quickly.

Last July, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board published a draft environmental impact statement for a control test to fight the aquatic weeds. The solution that's being proposed is controversial and has never been done before. If approved, the Lahontan water board would grant an exemption to a rule that prohibits herbicides in Tahoe so they could be used in a test to measure their efficacy to destroy the weeds before the infestation gets worse. Opponents like the Sierra Club call the herbicides a "Band-Aid" solution that could have greater consequences. But it's a last resort option that even the League to Save Lake Tahoe — a staunch defender of the lake's clarity and ecology — supports, with conditions.

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“Some stakeholders believe using aquatic herbicide is the only way to confront a weed infestation of this magnitude,” reads the environmental impact statement.

I wanted to learn more, not just about the herbicides and the weeds, but how a development built on important wetlands started this big issue in the first place. That's how I wound up in the Tahoe Keys to meet representatives of the League to Save Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association. They said they could show me the problem, which is clearly visible beneath the water.

I parked my car on the side of a cul-de-sac and walked across the street to meet Jesse Patterson and Chris Joseph, chief strategy officer and communications manager, respectively, of the League to Save Lake Tahoe. They led me down a ramp toward the water where a pontoon boat was waiting for us. On board was Greg Hoover, who supervises the weed control operations for the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association. This group has been working collaboratively with the Lahontan water board and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, among other

groups, on the complex and controversial project to cut back the aquatic weeds in the Tahoe Keys and stop the infestation's spread in Lake Tahoe.

As soon as the pontoon left shore, a mess of oozing, stringy, brown muck spit out from beneath the boat. The plants swirled at the surface of the water, like a clump of seaweed except we were hundreds of miles from the ocean. As we motored out into the canals, I could see strings of plant life circling along the water's surface and gathering in slimy clumps everywhere.

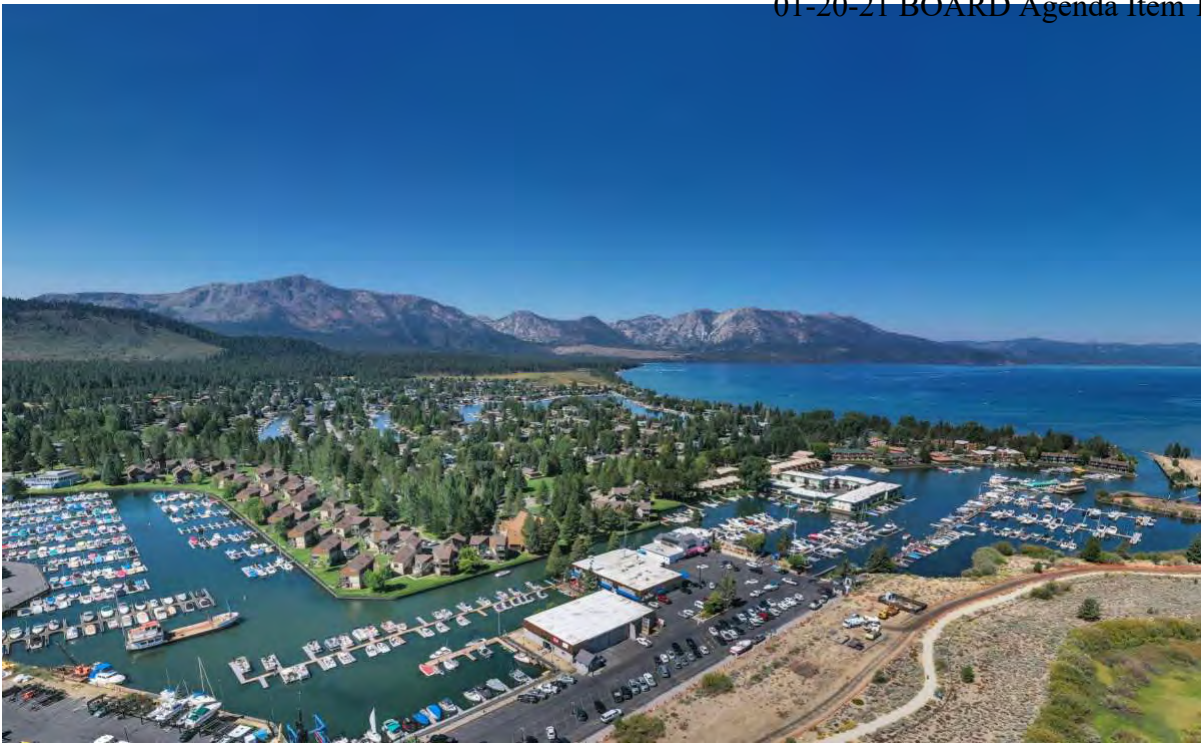
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The homeowners in the Tahoe Keys have been dealing with this mess since the 1970s at least. It's Hoover's job to harvest and control those weeds, which are mostly Eurasian watermilfoil, coontail and curlyleaf pondweed. His method is essentially to mow the water, he explains. Imagine a floating lawn mower on a paddle wheel that chops the top four to five feet of the plants off.

Hoover told me his staff mows the water and cuts back the weeds five days a week in the summer. (The Tahoe Keys are mostly frozen over in winter.) But it's not very effective. Like a lawn mower, the harvesting boat leaves fragments of the plants in its wake. Those fragments float to the bottom and seed new plants, making the issue worse.

"One fragment creates one new plant," Hoover said, explaining the process to me as the pontoon steadily motored through the canals. "That's just the way it works."



Agencies and property owners are collaborating on a solution to combat the invasive weeds. An environmental study is underway for a test that may use herbicides for the first time in Lake Tahoe. Courtesy of League to Save Lake Tahoe

The weeds are out of control and have profoundly altered the ecosystem in the Tahoe Keys. The infestation has spread to 172 acres of the subdivision's waterways.

Although the Keys are man-made, they still have qualities of a wetland with a marshy bottom and warmer water. The invasive aquatic weeds are changing the nutrient concentrations and temperatures of the water. The growth is so dense, it's difficult for boats to navigate through the water, not to mention other health and safety risks associated with overgrown plant material in dark waters. Native fish species are also in peril.

And now, in large part because of boat traffic from the Keys, the weeds have already spread across 100 acres in Lake Tahoe. The infestation has been growing steadily in recent years and is fast catching up to the size of the problem inside the Keys. Last October, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District teamed up with a combination of public-private funding to dispatch scuba divers with the Marine Taxonomic Services to

Lake Tahoe to pull up the invasive weeds by hand and with “suction-dredging” equipment. Patterson described it to me as if scuba divers had shop vacs.

“We’re going to see what grows back,” Patterson said in a phone interview the first week of January. The scuba diver cleanup will be expanded next summer, too. The method is expensive and time-consuming, but hopefully it’s effective.

To help prevent further spread of the infestation, the Keys installed a “bubble curtain” at the mouth of the west channel, which connects the residential lagoons to Lake Tahoe. It’s like a v-shaped underwater wall of bubbles that’s designed to dislodge fragments of the weeds from the underbellies of boats leaving the Keys. Then, seabins, or “floating trash cans” as the League describes them, collect the fragments before they land and seed new plants. A second bubble curtain is going to be installed on the east channel, the entrance between the Keys marina and the lake, this winter.

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Patterson pointed out that the problem in the lake is vastly different from the problem inside the Keys. Divers can still come in and pluck weeds from Lake Tahoe, but they couldn't do that in the Keys because it's so overgrown and so mucky that any disturbance would lead to a blinding black swirl of mud.

That's why officials are looking to use a last resort option in the Tahoe Keys: herbicides.

Herbicides are prohibited in Lake Tahoe, which is designated as an Outstanding National Resource Water. That means that Lake Tahoe is held to strict water quality standards, including a ban on any element that would degrade the water.

But the weed problem has gotten so bad that in 2017, the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association submitted an exemption application to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. The idea is to implement a test that's small in scope and will help officials see the impact herbicides might have to control the weed infestation.

The test would look at a variety of methods in different control plots. In addition to aquatic herbicides, the test would also include UV light and a method called laminar flow aeration that removes nutrients from the sediment. Patterson said the environmental study for the test cost more than \$1 million. It would be a three-year test with a two-year observation period. After the test, officials expect to use the results to do another environmental review for a larger-scale project to contain the weed infestation at large throughout the Tahoe Keys.

“It’s a huge deal. We want to make sure it’s done correctly and done in a way that addresses the aquatic invasive species threat,” Patterson said. “We’re not interested in using [herbicides] in perpetuity or using them anywhere else but the Keys.”

Patterson said the league is comfortable with the test’s use of the herbicides because the concentrations are low and it would be a one-time use intended to knock the weeds back to a level that would make them manageable with other non-herbicide methods. The league does not support using the herbicides permanently.

“That’s too big a risk,” Patterson said.

A decision to approve the draft environmental impact statement and the test project was originally slated for later this winter, but the Lahontan water board delayed a decision until summer 2021. The delay bumps back the test project until spring 2022, at least.

“Number one, we want to make sure that the environmental review and that the agencies are doing their due diligence so we get the best test,” Patterson said. “We build public confidence in the process. We build the test in a way that will tell us what a long term solution will look like.”

More Lake Tahoe News

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From: [Zimmerman, John](mailto:Zimmerman,John)
To: greydove1939@yahoo.com
Subject: RE: New submission from Comments to the Board
Date: Monday, December 28, 2020 4:29:10 PM

Hi JoAnn,

Thank you for your comment. TMWA does not control the amount or type of landscaping required for residential subdivisions in the Truckee Meadows. The local governments have set minimum landscaping requirements that developers must adhere to within each jurisdiction. Please let me know if you have any questions or want to discuss. I will ensure that your email is included in the record for the next TMWA Board meeting. I will also include this response.

Thanks.

John

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From: WEBSITE: Comments to the Board <info@waterforms.net>
Sent: Saturday, December 26, 2020 10:29 AM
To: Folsom, Sonia <sfolsom@tmwa.com>
Subject: New submission from Comments to the Board

Name
JoAnn Hass
Email
greydove1939@yahoo.com 01506260
Account Number
01506260
Comments
It seems unwise/STUPID in a drought prone area to allow developers to force home owners to have grass or junipers in their landscaping. Somersett/Sierra Canyon is a large community and our water usage for landscaping must be tremendous. If Reno/TMWA changed their requirements, think of our resource savings. We can beautify our communities in many other ways without wasting water. After all, this high desert has many beautiful plants! Thank you.

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Our vision is to enhance the quality of life in the Truckee Meadows by delivering exceptional, customer-focused water services.