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EPA Announces \$1.9 Million Nevada Investment, Supported by Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to Revitalize Communities

Nevada Communities Will Receive Brownfields Assessment Grants to Help Build A Better America While Advancing Environmental Justice

May 12, 2022

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LAS VEGAS – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing a \$1,934,000 investment in Nevada to revitalize communities across the state by cleaning up contaminated and blighted properties and redeveloping them for productive reuse. The funding in Nevada will be provided through four EPA Brownfields Assessment grants. The grants are supported by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides a total of \$1.5 billion to advance environmental justice, spur economic

revitalization, and create jobs by cleaning up so-called “brownfield” properties -- contaminated, polluted, or hazardous sites slated for revitalization through a specialized EPA program.

“Today’s announcement breathes new life into Nevada communities by turning contaminated properties into economically productive community resources,” said **EPA Pacific Southwest Regional Administrator Martha Guzman**. “Thanks to the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EPA is significantly increasing our investments in Nevada communities, providing assistance to areas long overburdened and underserved.”

“This is good news for communities all over the Silver State that want to assess pollution at industrial sites and make plans to clean them,” said **United States Senator Catherine Cortez Masto**. “I’ll continue working with the EPA to ensure that they have the resources they need to protect Nevada’s communities.”

“I applaud the Environmental Protection Agency for awarding these grants to communities across Nevada to aid in the cleanup of brownfields and redevelopment of these contaminated sites,” said **United States Senator Jacky Rosen**. “These grants will help remove contaminants, repurpose former industrial sites, and ultimately promote economic development. I will continue working in the Senate to ensure that Nevadans have the resources they need to revitalize our communities.”

EPA’s Brownfields Program also delivers on the Biden Administration’s Justice40 Initiative EXIT <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2021/07/20/the-path-to-achieving-justice40/>>, which directs at least 40 percent of the overall benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities. EPA is committed to meeting and exceeding this goal. Approximately 86 percent of the communities selected to receive funding as part of today's announcement will support historically underserved areas.

EPA’s funding supports Nevada communities’ efforts to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges caused by brownfields by stimulating economic opportunity and environmental revitalization. Projects range from assessing former gas stations in urban Las Vegas and Henderson to focusing on Tribal solid waste facilities and mine-scarred lands.

Humboldt County is selected to receive a \$500,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant to conduct environmental site assessments and prepare cleanup plans, with a focus on downtown Lovelock and central Winnemucca and the communities of Orovada and McDermitt. Priority properties are former auto repair and agricultural chemical storage areas, as well as mine-scarred lands and blighted highway, commercial, and old railroad corridors. Grant funds will also be used to support community engagement through public workshops, charrettes, stakeholder interviews, and a dedicated website.

The City of Las Vegas is selected for a \$500,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant to conduct environmental site assessments and to prepare cleanup plans and area-wide revitalization strategies. The project will focus on the Westside and Rafael Rivera neighborhoods. Priority properties include former dry cleaners, vacant former auto dealerships, gas stations, and auto repair shops. The grant will also be used to support community engagement through a public kickoff event, outreach materials and a project webpage.

The Henderson Redevelopment Agency is selected to receive a \$500,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant to conduct environmental site assessments and prepare site-specific cleanup plans along an approximately 7.5 mile length of Boulder Highway. Priority properties are former gas stations, auto sales and service businesses, and junkyards within Henderson's downtown district and the Pittman and Valley View neighborhoods. Grant funds also will be used to engage the surrounding community through community partner meetings and outreach materials.

The NyE Communities Coalition is selected for a \$434,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant to conduct environmental site assessments and prepare cleanup and reuse plans, with a focus on properties in Nye, Esmeralda, and Lincoln Counties and the Duckwater Shoshone Reservation in Nevada. Priority sites include the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe solid waste facility, the Pioche workforce housing complex, and the Silver Peak portion of Esmeralda County, a vacant land parcel formerly used for mining. The grant will also be used to conduct public meetings and community outreach activities.

A full list of the applicants selected for funding is available here: Brownfields Applicants Selected <<https://epa.gov/brownfields/applicants-selected-fy-2022-brownfields-assessment-rlf-cleanup-grants-and-rlf>>.

Since its inception in 1995, EPA's investments in brownfield sites have leveraged more than \$35 billion in cleanup and redevelopment. This has led to significant benefits for communities across the country. For example:

To date, this funding has led to more than 183,000 jobs in cleanup, construction, and redevelopment.

Based on grant recipient reporting, recipients leveraged an average \$20.43 for each EPA Brownfields dollar and 10.3 jobs per \$100,000 of EPA Brownfield Grant funds expended on assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund cooperative agreements.

In addition, an academic peer-reviewed study has found that residential properties near brownfield sites increased in value by 5% to 15% because of cleanup activities.

Finally, analyzing data near 48 brownfields, EPA found an estimated \$29 million to \$97 million in additional tax revenue for local governments in a single year after cleanup—2 to 7 times more than the \$12.4 million EPA contributed to the cleanup of those brownfield sites.

For more on Brownfields Grants: Types-brownfields-grant-funding

<<https://epa.gov/brownfields/types-epa-brownfield-grant-funding>>.

For more on EPA's Brownfields Program: Brownfields Program <<https://epa.gov/brownfields>>.

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05-12-22

Lawns are terrible for the environment. California's water restrictions may finally kill them

Landscape designers weigh in on how drought conditions could change the look of Southern California — and eventually the rest of the West.



[Source Image: Stephen Swintek/Getty Images]



BY NATE BERG

6 MINUTE READ

After years of **on-again-off-again drought conditions** and **decades of precarity** relying on imported water, Southern California has instituted major limitations on how residents can use water. Within weeks,



drought conditions are projected for the western United States through 2030 at least. What's happening now in Southern California could soon be seen in broader swathes of the West. Watering limitations could dramatically reshape the look of the outdoors.

The new rules were put in place by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which delivers water to 19 million people in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties. In late April, it declared a Water Shortage Emergency, barring residents from watering more than once per week starting June 1. Individual water agencies within the district that are found to be exceeding limits will face fines, which will likely trickle down to individual water users. If conditions get worse, the district could enforce even stricter limitations, including an all-out ban on any non-essential outdoor irrigation. With an estimated 30% of a family's daily water use going to outdoor irrigation, cutting down watering can be an impactful way to save water.

The strict watering limitations and the heat of the Southern California summer could mean yards across the region will turn to dust. But according to landscape architects and designers working in the region, this may be an opportunity to finally kill off dated ideas about suburban landscaping. The imposition of watering limits may actually accelerate current trends in landscape design, from the availability of plants to new ways of watering.

GOOD-BYE FRONDS, HELLO, CACTI

Despite annual rainfall that's often measured in single digit inches, greater Los Angeles is still known for its lush yards and broad fields of grass. Thirsty trees like eucalyptus and ficus were planted with abandon in decades past, and though the region's environmentally minded have been opting for succulents and cacti, green lawns make up the front yards of communities from Beverly Hills to Pasadena to Laguna Beach.



Vista Hermosa Nature Park, Los Angeles, CA. [Photo: courtesy Studio MLA]

Landscape architect Mia Lehrer says the new restrictions could help more people see the beauty in drought-tolerant plants. Her firm, [Studio-MLA](#), has designed several parks in the L.A. area that embrace species that are able to withstand low water conditions, including a [garden outside L.A.'s Natural History Museum](#) and a hillside park overlooking downtown. Rather than vibrant but non-native flowers and jungle-like fronds, these spaces use native grasses like buckwheat, shrubs like manzanita, and trees like singleleaf piñon that can persevere through dry periods. Lehrer says some sections of the gardens outside the museum, planted in 2013, only need watering once every two weeks. "For many of us in Southern California over the last 10 years, the issue of how much water we're using and what plant materials we're designing into projects has been front and center of design," she says.

But designing around water scarcity isn't as simple as getting rid of all the thirsty plants and replacing them with species better adapted to dry conditions. Many species weren't even available at commercial nurseries. "It was tricky finding the plant material," Lehrer says of those early years. "Sometimes you had to grow them yourself during construction."

But now a wider array of plants is being sold by nurseries, and both designers and amateur landscapers can more easily include them in their planting plans, according to Lehrer. She expects the new watering restrictions to make designers and those commissioning them more open to using this expansive palette of plants in new projects. "There are so many varieties of trees that have come into the market," Lehrer says, citing drought-tolerant trees like oaks and sycamores.



Eagle Rock Elementary School
Los Angeles, CA. [Photo: courtesy Studio MLA]

OLD WATER IS NEW AGAIN

John Lesak is a principal at the architecture and design firm [Page & Turnbull](#), and he says there's been a growing understanding among designers that drought-tolerant design is the way forward for Southern California. But regulatory and permitting issues have sometimes hindered the implementation of these designs. He points to water-saving techniques like water harvesting, such as the capture and storage of rainwater, and graywater reuse, which directs nontoxic waste water from kitchen sinks and showers into the landscape instead of the sewer. Some public agencies are quicker to appreciate these concepts than others, particularly those worried about people and pets coming into contact with potentially unclean water. "While the building folks may want to be doing this, the health people are saying hold on a second," Lesak says.

These rules are beginning to bend. Lesak's firm is working on a number of projects that are exploring new ways of landscaping without traditional irrigation. One is a pilot project for the San Gabriel Valley Water Conservation Authority that's exploring new ways of capturing and reusing water on site. The project is a demonstration intended to show off new approaches to landscape design, and includes several wetland-like bioswales that can capture and absorb stormwater during the region's infrequent rains, and large underground cisterns that can store recycled water for irrigation—approaches that can be tricky for homeowners to get permitted. The ideas being tested here could eventually find their way into residential yards and public parks.

One new design consideration this raises is that unlike a simple grid of buried irrigation lines and sprinkler heads, these approaches require a bit more space. That can be challenging in a region like Southern California, where rains are few and far between, and any storage system has to be able to hold a one-off deluge for months at a time. Lesak says new projects have to design in larger areas where cisterns can be buried, for example. But he says there's a range of tools for accommodating the



Amid regular drought conditions, city agencies are becoming more flexible when it comes to approving new regulations for requiring drought tolerant plants, incentivizing the removal of turf grass, and even the reuse of water from sinks and showers.

In Los Angeles County, for example, the Department of Public Health has issued new [guidelines for the use of “alternative” water sources](#), including the non-potable graywater from kitchen sinks and clothes washing machines. “It clearly called out how to address water reuse safely and encourages owners to address stormwater, graywater, rainwater, and recycled water without getting bogged down in red tape and bureaucracy,” says Kathleen Hetrick, a sustainability engineer at [Buro Happold](#), an engineering firm with an office in L.A. “It gave everyone in the industry more confidence that water reuse is a positive for a project, and not a headache.”

Other governments across California are making similar regulatory improvements. Hetrick says cities like San Francisco are even exploring the [on-site recycling of so-called blackwater](#), including what gets flushed down the toilet, so that it can be used for irrigation. The drought and future water scarcity is pushing cities to think more expansively about where water can come from. “There are so many resources for creating the policy we need,” Hetrick says.

The changes underway have been building up for years, and the imposition of the region’s once-per-week watering limits may be a loud wake-up call to finally put them into place at a larger scale. That may not mean the widespread disappearance of the classic front lawn, but in a water-conscious future, they’re almost certain to be the exception rather than the rule.



Mountain West News Bureau

A regional collaboration of public media stations that serve the Rocky Mountain States of Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

Mapping snowpack from the skies brings new precision to water forecasting

KUNM | By Emma Gibson



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Airborne Snow Observatories

Airborne view during the Airborne Snow Observatories flight on April 21, 2022, looking south into the Taylor and East River watersheds, upper Gunnison River in Colorado.

News brief

As climate change shifts the norms of water management, a company is mapping the West to collect more accurate snow depth data.

Airborne Snow Observatories flies planes over watersheds and beams hundreds of thousands of laser pulses each second to the snowpack below using a laser scanner or airborne lidar system. They're creating elevation maps that aid in calculating snow depth and the water supply forecast across the West.

As the Associated Press [reported](#), the company, a spinoff from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, recently mapped the headwaters of the Colorado River for the first time.

ASO co-founder Jeffrey Deems says by comparing these maps to ones done in the summer, they can calculate the snow's depth throughout the whole watershed, bringing more precision and scope to water forecasting and management.

"What can you do when you have higher confidence in your snow inventory and therefore your water supply forecast?" Deems said of the possibilities. "Can you start to make more informed decisions earlier in the year? Do you get early warning of floods or droughts within the year that can improve decision making come snowmelt season?"

Conventional methods used by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service monitor snowpack via SNOTEL stations. A mountain watershed in Colorado could have several of these stations that continuously monitor snowpack weight and estimate the amount of water available when snowpack melts.

But this method, Deems says, relies on comparisons to past data and can be less dependable as climate change alters snow accumulation and melt patterns.

"What we're doing is mapping the snowpack everywhere," Deems said. "It gives us an accurate snow volume and therefore decouples us from that reliance on the historic record."

He says with aerial snow mapping they can get "very accurate" depths every three meters throughout the whole watershed, and since their clients have all been public entities the data is accessible to the public on the ASO's [website](#).

It's expensive, Deems says, but inaccurate and geographically limited data also has its costs.

"If we have less confidence in our runoff forecasts that impacts the distribution of water rights, the availability of water in early and late seasons for farmers and ranchers, and municipalities," Deems said.

Deems says they're learning more about the dynamics of snow accumulation and runoff – what he calls the "basin plumbing."

In the Mountain West, the company's hoping to expand its mapping into New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona.

Aerial snow mapping grows across U.S. West



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Emma Gibson

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Fishing report: Cooler temps should extend Truckee River season



Jim Krajewski

Reno Gazette Journal

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The cold and windy days over the past week in Northern Nevada should help prolong the snowpack in the mountains and possibly extended the fishing season on the Truckee River.

Cooler temperatures will also help keep the water cool, although it is expected to warm up quite a bit later this week, with daytime highs getting into the lower 80s this weekend across the Truckee Meadows, according to the National Weather Service.

Free Fishing Day in Nevada is scheduled for June 11; no license will be required to fish anywhere in the state that day.

Nearby in California, campground openings are delayed at Lake Davis. Preparations are being made to open some sites at Wyandotte Campground at Little Grass Valley Recreation Area, as well as sites in Sly Creek and Strawberry Campgrounds in the Sly Creek Recreation Area on May 22.

May 4 fishing report: Little Washoe Lake receives stocking of catfish

Here is this week's fishing report, as compiled from various sources.

LAKE DAVIS: Anglers are picking up bass now, from boats and shore around the dam. Try Needlefish and light spoons. For bass, spinner baits are doing well early in the morning. Some Plumas recreation site openings are delayed. This includes facilities at Lake Davis and in the Feather River Canyon, which were originally scheduled to open last weekend. *Info from Mark Fore & Strike, 775-786-3474 or 775-322-9559.*

FRENCHMAN LAKE: Almost entire lake is open, fishing around west cove by the dam producing fish. PT nymph under indicator is doing well. *Mountain Hardware, Truckee, 530-587-4844.*

TRUCKEE RIVER: The Truckee is still holding at around 1,000 CFS in the canyon section, but the big change has come upstream along Glenshire Drive where flows have gone up to around 750 CFS thanks to heavy run-off in the upstream creeks, primarily Donner Creek, which is flowing at around 300 CFS near the confluence of the Truckee. This added some turbidity to the water and helped keep water temps cool. This makes fish less willing to move for your offerings, so try larger bugs to entice them, and fish later in the day as temps warm up.

Starting to see a good mix of spring hatches happen as well as standard winter fare such as BWOs and midges. But with the off-color water, we recommend using Stoneflies, worms or eggs in tandem with bugs imitating march browns, caddis or BWOs. Fishing in the canyon can be a great way to find some protection from the elements and using indicators will certainly outperform the tightline set up which can be next to impossible to fish during high winds.

Fishing is a little easier east of Sparks, where the river is wider and slower. Run an indicator with a leech or bugger, or even dry flies. Between Tahoe and down past the town of Truckee, the river is high and fast, making the fishing more technical and fish are up against the edges where there is more debris. *From Miles and crew at Trout Creek Outfitters in Truckee, 530-563-5119.*

Weather patterns: Winds pack extra punch as record-breaking gusts recorded

LITTLE TRUCKEE RIVER: Seeing some great flows over the last few weeks and the fish are responding positively. However, with a mix of high water and late season storms, we have not seen great dry-fly fishing out here yet. Using a Euro Nymph set up can be a great way to get into fish, as long as the wind allows. If using an indicator, we recommend using white or clear "thingamabobbers," airlocks or yarnies to prevent spooking fish.

Dry droppers with a heavy nymph and a long drop (3-5-feet) can be another great way to present to these educated fish now. Keep in mind that even though this is small water and you wont need as much weight as the Truckee, the runs here are short and using heavy nymphs to get down quick will help tremendously. *From Miles and crew at Trout Creek Outfitters in Truckee, 530-563-5119.*

PYRAMID LAKE: The bite continues to be a little spotty with mixed reports. It appears to be mostly a stripping game at the moment and using a type 3 sinking line with buggers, boobies and beetles on beaches with a gradual drop-off seems the most consistent. As we come into the tail end of the season out here, the crowds have diminished and it can be a great time to go out if you don't like combat fishing. There was a report from an angler who caught a 20-pounder during an otherwise slow outing last week. *Trout Creek Outfitters, Truckee, 530-563-5119.*

TOPAZ LAKE: Topaz has been stocked well this season and is fishing great, especially around the south end. Aim for the beds, where the smallmouth bass are more aggressive. *Mark Fore & Strike, 775-786-3474 or 775-322-9559.*

SPARKS MARINA: Kastmaster lures have been working well here, because they can be cast farther out and they sink deep. Nightcrawlers or Powerbait also working well, with a bobber. Some rainbows up to 3 pounds coming out lately. Fishing for carp and catfish has become popular here, especially along the east side. *Mark Fore & Strike, 775-786-3474 or 775-322-9559.*

DONNER LAKE: The boat ramp is open There are some holdover rainbows being caught by anglers trolling worms and flashers, Rapalas and small spoons. The best shore fishing for anglers is near the west end beach and boat ramp. According to fish and game, Donner Lake has not been stocked yet. Currently at 84 percent capacity. *Mountain Hardware, Truckee, 530-587-4844.*

BOCA: Boca Reservoir is almost full. Mornings and evenings are producing more bites. Anglers are seeing a good rainbow and cutthroat bite off of the dam using Powerbait and worms. There is a five-fish limit in this lake with no size limit. Anglers trolling the shore line with small spoons and small Rapalas are also producing some fish. Boats can be launched on the east and west shores. For launching larger boats, the main boat ramp on the west side is recommended. Currently at 78 percent capacity. *Mountain Hardware, Truckee, 530-587-4844.*

STAMPEDE: Boat ramp is open with a decent trout bite happening in most of the coves. Anglers trolling for Kokanee should try trolling around 30 feet for the best size fish. Not much is going on for shore fishing. The best spot for shore anglers is off the dam using Powerbait, worms or casting lures. Currently at 50 percent capacity. *Mountain Hardware, Truckee, 530-587-4844.*

PROSSER RESERVOIR: The boat ramp is open. Trolling for cutthroat and rainbows is good in 15 feet of water. Prosser also has great shore access around the whole lake with a good shore bite. Throw your favorite lures off the bank or soak a worm off the bottom or under a bobber. Regulations here are a five-fish limit with no size limit. Prosser is fishing the best out of all the Truckee reservoirs now. Currently at 51 percent capacity. *Mountain Hardware, Truckee 530-587-4844.*


SOUTH FORK RESERVOIR: South Fork has received extra fish that other waters were not able to take during the past few years in the NDOW stocking program. Fish can grow quickly here and are in good condition. Trout are averaging 19 inches in length. The largemouth bass have come on strong and bass anglers should also have good fishing for both largemouth and smallmouth.

Wipers (white bass x striped bass hybrid) have not been stocked in over a decade, but NDOW is planning on stocking them in both South Fork and Wildhorse this summer. Fishing both reservoirs this spring has been good and while water levels aren't ideal, anglers should be able to take advantage of the good fishing conditions, at least for this year. *Provided by NDOW.*

CROWLEY LAKE: Fishing has remained good here. The Upper Owens and Crowley Lake tributaries are seeing some cutthroat trout. *Sierra Drifters, 760-935-4250, sierradriftersgs@gmail.com.*

HOT CREEK: The water is low and hatches are sporadic. Micro midges are getting some looks. Conditions should pick up here soon with a little water run-off. *Sierra Drifters, 760-935-4250, sierradriftersgs@gmail.com.*

Jim Krajewski covers high school and youth sports for the Reno Gazette Journal. Follow him on Twitter @RGJPreps. Support his work by subscribing to RGJ.com.

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EPA Announces Additional \$1.9 Billion in State Revolving Loan Funds for Water Infrastructure Upgrades

\$1.9 Billion in annual appropriations adds to \$7.7 billion in SRF funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2022

May 13, 2022

Contact Information

EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced \$1.9 billion in grant funding to the State Revolving Funds (SRF) to accelerate progress on water infrastructure projects. Combined with historic investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this funding will help states, Tribes, and territories upgrade water infrastructure to provide safe drinking water, protect vital water resources, and create thousands of new jobs in communities across the country.

“Our nation’s water infrastructure is in significant need of upgrades to support

communities that rely on it day-in and day-out. With this funding provided through annual appropriations, coupled with investments under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EPA is providing \$9.6 billion in the SRFs to deliver the benefits of water infrastructure investments to more communities—especially those that have long been overburdened by water challenges,” **said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox.**

In 2022, EPA is providing approximately \$3.2 billion to the Clean Water SRFs, including \$1.2 billion in new base federal grant funding being announced today and \$2 billion through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This total investment represents a near doubling of annual investment in the Clean Water SRF to support a wide range of water infrastructure projects, including modernizing aging wastewater infrastructure, implementing water reuse and recycling, and addressing stormwater. More than \$47 million in direct grant funding is available to Tribes, certain U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia for infrastructure projects.

EPA is also providing \$6.4 billion to the Drinking Water SRFs, including \$728 million in new base federal grant funding announced today and \$5.7 billion through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This total investment represents a six-fold increase in annual investment to help drinking water systems remove lead service lines, install treatment for contaminants, and improve system resiliency to natural disasters such as floods. More than \$32 million in direct grant funding is available to Tribes, certain U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia to use for drinking water system upgrades.

"States are eager to put these annual Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds to work in conjunction with the unprecedented funding provided for the SRFs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and some states' use of American Rescue Plan funding for water infrastructure. These combined funds will allow states to address critical infrastructure challenges and to support projects in communities across the country bringing significant public health and environmental benefits," **said President of the Environmental Council of the States and Secretary of the Maryland Department of Environment Ben Grumbles.**

EPA encourages states, Tribes, and territories to strategically deploy SRF funding through the BIL alongside SRF base funding and other water infrastructure financing

tools to make rapid progress on their most pressing needs. The agency is continuing to work with states, Tribes, and territories to ensure that disadvantaged communities fully benefit from historic investments in the water sector.

Learn more about EPA's Drinking Water SRF <<https://epa.gov/dwsrf>> and Clean Water SRF <<https://epa.gov/cwsrf>> programs.

Learn more about water infrastructure investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law <<https://epa.gov/infrastructure/water-infrastructure-investments>>.

Background

Under the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs, EPA provides funding to all 50 states and Puerto Rico to capitalize SRF loan programs. For the base programs, the states and Puerto Rico contribute an additional 20 percent to match the federal grants. The 51 SRF programs function like infrastructure banks by providing low-interest loans to eligible recipients for drinking water and clean water infrastructure projects. As the loan principal and interest are repaid over time, it allows the state's Drinking Water SRF or Clean Water SRF to be recycled or "revolve." As money is returned to the state's revolving loan fund, the state makes new loans to other eligible recipients. These funds can also be combined with BIL funding and EPA's WIFIA loans to create a powerful, innovative financing solution for major infrastructure projects.

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NEWSROOM

The Nature Conservancy in Nevada Welcomes Mickey Hazelwood as New Conservation Director

May 15, 2022 | Reno, NV

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MICKEY HAZELWOOD The Nature Conservancy in Nevada Conservation Director, Mickey Hazelwood © Simon Williams/TNC

After a competitive search, The Nature Conservancy in Nevada (TNC) has recently announced Mickey Hazelwood as its conservation director. In his new role, Hazelwood will lead TNC’s strategic efforts to ensure resilient lands, resilient waters, and climate action for Nevada, and contribute toward the global organization’s ambitious 2030 goals for a sustainable world for people and nature.

“Our chapter has needed a dedicated conservation director and filling this role has been one of my top priorities,” says Mauricia Baca, TNC in Nevada State Director. “I am so excited that Mickey Hazelwood will be in this important position to support our conservation team as they advance our critical initiatives. I look forward to us working together as we move into the next phase of our work on behalf of people and nature in Nevada.”

Hazelwood’s experience and depth and breadth of conservation achievements made him a

standout choice for the role. He has been with TNC in Nevada for 16 years and most recently served as the chapter's strategy director for protection and stewardship. He also directed TNC's work in the Truckee, Carson, and Walker River watersheds and led the Truckee River Project, which has been focused on restoring ecosystem function along the highly degraded reach of the river between Reno and Wadsworth, Nev. This \$30 million restoration program has been supported through a partnership with numerous local, state, and federal agencies and organizations, and to date the TNC has restored approximately 11 miles of the lower Truckee River and more than 800 acres of adjacent floodplain and upland habitats. Hazelwood's successes also include joining an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service and other partners to implement more forest treatments in high-risk areas of the watershed to reduce the frequency and impacts of large wildfires.

Hazelwood's previous work experience includes conservation easement development, conservation design for the protection of large tracts of ranchland, project management and land surveying. He holds a B.S. in applied geography from Appalachian State University and a M.S. in applied geography from New Mexico State University.

The conservation director role has been an interim position since 2019. The permanent position was made possible thanks to generous and transformative gifts from two TNC in Nevada trustees: Jennifer Satre and her husband Phil Satre, and John McDonough.

"These transformative investments truly put the Nevada chapter on the road to success," Baca says. "I am very grateful to Jennifer and Phil Satre and to John McDonough for their trust and confidence in our team, and for these generous gifts that will help us grow our capacity and ensure that people and nature thrive in Nevada."

TNC has been working in Nevada for 38 years and its work in the state is focused on three initiatives: resilient lands, resilient waters and climate action. Its history of conservation accomplishments in Nevada includes helping to establish both the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Red Rock Canyon Conservation Area, restoring 11 miles of the Truckee River, and guiding restoration efforts to support sage-grouse and Nevada's economy. Since its founding in 1984, the Nevada chapter has conserved more than 3 million acres of land and has achieved more than \$90 million in land protection projects in the Silver State.

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LOCAL NEWS

Water-wise, Longmont is in better shape than many communities



Dan Shippee, instrumental control supervisor at the Nelson Flanders Water Treatment Plant, is busy troubleshooting the operation in Longmont on May 13, 2022. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer) ,

By **MATTHEW BENNETT** | mbennett@prairiemountainmedia.com |
PUBLISHED: May 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. | UPDATED: May 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.



Although the number fluctuates by season, Longmont water resources analyst Wes Lowrie estimates that the city uses approximately 15 million gallons of water each day.

That includes water flowing out of taps in residences, businesses, schools, parks and everywhere else in Longmont.

“In the wintertime, it’s probably more like ... eight million gallons a day,” Lowrie said of Longmont’s average daily water use. “In the summer, it’s probably more like 25 million gallons per day.”



Dan Shippee, instrumental control supervisor at the Nelson Flanders Water Treatment Plant, is busy troubleshooting the operation in Longmont on May 13, 2022. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

Lowrie makes clear that water users throughout the city have continued to demonstrate their ability to conserve the liquid commodity, especially over the course of the last two-plus decades.

The population of Longmont in 2000 was 71,303, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, and in 2020 was 98,885 residents.

However, despite its increase in residents, Longmont’s water demand has decreased by 5% compared to 20 years ago, which Lowrie credited to local water conservation practices.



On its website, the city lists several indoor and outdoor water conservation techniques, including watering lawns and gardens no more than twice a week, xeriscaping when possible and installing low-flow showerheads that use two gallons per minute or less.

“You’re always looking at your current year, but you’re also trying to plan for beyond just the year in front of you,” Lowrie said. “Longmont, we plan for a one-in-a-100-year drought over a seven-year duration. So, we take a fairly aggressive approach to make sure that we have enough water to cover that hypothetical event.”

According to Lowrie, water providers often plan for a one-in-50-year drought over a five-year period, which is less severe.

During its regular session Tuesday, the Longmont City Council approved the city’s 2022-23 water supply and drought management plan. The decision was unanimous.

Longmont gets its water primarily from snowmelt in the Rocky Mountain National Park area and has “multiple sources” it can pull from, Lowrie explained.



The Nelson Flanders Water Treatment Plant in Longmont on May 13, 2022. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

As part of the plan, personnel from Longmont’s Water Resources Division and Public Works and Natural Resources Department will monitor storage levels in Ralph Price Reservoir and the St. Vrain Creek Basin.



If the combination of supply and available storage exceeds projected water demand by more than 135%, the city will not be considered in a drought scenario, the plan stated.

Should raw water supplies drop to between 105 and 120% of projected water demand, the city would require its customers to reduce their water use by a “minimum 10%,” according to the plan.

Currently, this city’s water supply is at a “sustainable conservation level.”

“It explains that Longmont has been prudent in the way it has provisioned itself with water, and that we have been prudent in the way we have used water in the past,” Councilmember Marcia Martin said at Tuesday’s City Council meeting. “We have plenty is the bottom line there.”

“Not every community has multiple sources to get water,” Lowrie said. “Some have one source, and if something happens to that source, they’re struggling.”

In addition to residents being more conscientious about their own water usage, Lowrie credited the city itself for establishing several ways to receive water over the course of its 150-year history.

As of May 14, snowpack totals across Colorado were 61% of median with drier conditions in the southern portion of the state.

While the South Platte Basin that includes Longmont was 74% of average, the Arkansas basin over Colorado Springs and Pueblo was just 28% of normal.

“It’s kind of like putting money into the bank,” Lowrie said. “The more money you have in the bank, the more you’re able to withstand a longer period of tough times.”



**Matthew
Bennett**



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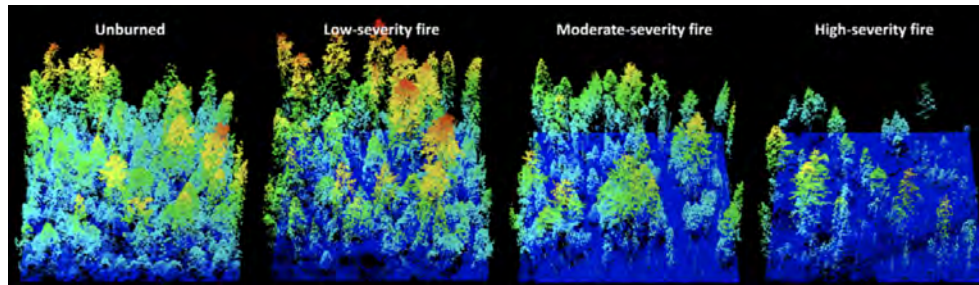
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Yale Environment 360

E360 DIGEST
MAY 16, 2022

Laser Imaging Reveals How Fire Renews Sierra Nevada Forests



Laser imaging shows how fires reshape forests. Warmer colors indicate taller vegetation. VAN R. KANE / UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Plane-mounted laser imaging has allowed scientists to map the size, shape, and density of trees in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California, revealing how low- and moderate-intensity burns make forests more resilient to larger blazes.

Historically, scientists could only map small plots of forest in great detail, which limited the scope of studies. But with high-resolution laser imaging, or “lidar,” scientists can gather more refined data on a broader swath of woodlands, offering greater insight into their response to fire, as scientists detailed in a [recent article](#) in *Eos*. Previous fieldwork, for instance, suggested that low-severity fires only affected underbrush, but lidar research in Yosemite National Park indicates that weak fires also incinerate dead and unhealthy trees, keeping forests vibrant.

Other lidar research found that parts of Yosemite subjected to repeated burns began to look as they did before the arrival of Europeans, with ample open space in between tree stands. The research further showed that even a single moderate burn in a dense forest could restore the gaps and openings typical of the precolonial era. The findings underscore the role that prescribed burns can play in keeping forests healthy, as thinner forests with fewer dead or dying trees can better withstand severe wildfires.

Lidar [research](#) also shows how to administer burns while preserving threatened species, such as the spotted owl. California’s spotted owls need dense tree cover, but only near their nests, lidar data shows, meaning that forest managers can thin woodlands in other areas without endangering the birds.

“Understanding forest structure and responses to fire is more important than ever,” the authors write. “Improving our understanding will help us to ensure the health of

these important resources, prevent out-of-control fires that threaten lives and livelihoods, and preserve endangered wildlife habitat.”

A

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[Bringing Back Fire: How Burning Can Help Restore Eastern Lands](#)

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Search Site

People moving to northern Nevada from California, Las Vegas making housing even tougher

by Kim Burrows

Monday, May 16th 2022



Reno house for rent (KARNV)<p>{/p>

Reno, Nev. (News 4 & Fox 11) — People are moving to Northern Nevada even though the housing market is tight and rentals are expensive. Home prices reached a new high and rents continue to increase. So where are the new residents moving from?

[A new report from Apartment List](#) says people are likely moving to Reno from Sacramento, San Francisco and Las Vegas.

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In 2017, [News 4 reported](#) that people were moving from areas where there were lots of rules, regulations traffic and no room to expand. Back then they were moving from Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, the Los Angeles basin, San Francisco and Seattle.

More people moving to the area has put the squeeze on the rental and buying market. Reno rent is up 20% from two years ago. The median rent for a one bedroom apartment is \$1,042. A two bedroom apartment is \$1,321. New residents often rent before they buy and they quickly find out the median home price according to the Reno/Sparks Association of Realtors is \$595,000.

On top of the new businesses moving to the area which brought more employees to the area, people also realized that the expensive big cities were no longer important. The pandemic allowed people to work remotely and they could live anywhere.

"We don't have enough housing for them right now, driving up rental prices," said Scattini.



Becca Schiappa with her dog Grinch (KRVN)

cago in 2019.

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LIVE

"I feel like there's a huge influx of people even in the time I've been here," she said.

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Schiappa manages coffee shops in the area and said the migration to Reno also trickles down to employment too.

"I have a hard time employing and staffing at our locations because housing for a single person, even in a house where they have three roommates is unaffordable at this point in time," she said.

Apartment List reports when people move out of Reno, they're mostly likely move to Sacramento, San Francisco, and Las Vegas. The company collects data based off users searching on their platform from January to March of this year.

To see migrations for other cities, click [here](#).

Loading ...



Home > News > Business > **Business News: Hotel, child care, lake coming to Storey**

BUSINESS

Business News: Hotel, child care, lake coming to Storey County's TRI Center

By ThisIsReno | May 17, 2022

By Doug Puppel

Construction is expected to start in the next few weeks on an extended-stay hotel at the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center, bringing the first amenities to the sprawling industrial park.

The 231-room hotel would be adjacent to [Emerald Lake Town Center](#), a master-planned development surrounding a 75-acre, 650-million-gallon reservoir being built to provide water for evaporative cooling at the park's data centers.

Longtime [Las Vegas developer Jaimee Yoshizawa](#) and her partners from Hawaii are building the hotel with plans calling for a 13,600-square-foot Small Strides 2 preschool and doggie daycare to be built later.

“This is great news for the 10,000 people who work at the park and its visitors from all around the world,” Yoshizawa said. “They currently need to drive nearly 20 miles to find a place to stay or daycare for their children or pets.”





A 231-room hotel planned for the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center will be the first lodging at the industrial park that's home to Tesla and Panasonic's Gigafactory. Courtesy Ethos3 and CWX architects




Small Strides founder [Ryan Nicole Putzer](#), whose original campus is in Reno, said having a child-care facility onsite will make working at the industrial center more attractive to mothers.

“Women handle a lot of the child-care responsibilities, and this will give them more convenience, more peace of mind — and more time with their children,” said Putzer, who added she is considering other Small Strides locations outside the Reno-Sparks core.

Yoshizawa declined to provide a price tag for the extended-stay hotel project, saying “costs in this market are a moving target.”

Industrial park founder and Storey County Commissioner Lance Gillman has spoken of the Emerald Lake Town Center development as “a beautification project, and [there’ll be fountains and streams and waterfalls.](#)”

Randy Aleman Sr., a Las Vegas developer master planning the area around the reservoir, said that along with Yoshizawa’s hotel, another hotel in development and hospitality establishments, Emerald Lake Town Center would be “a mixed-use project of industrial and offices” with “a heavily landscaped trail around the lake.”

In an email, park executive Kris Thompson said the waterfront development would include a  lakefront property around the reclaimed water reservoir with frontage on both the lake and the USA

Parkway.”

The 16-mile, \$32 million under-construction pipeline that will fill the reservoir is expected to be completed late this year and “[moving 10,000 gallons a minute](#)” shortly after, the project’s engineer recently told Engineering News-Record. The industrial park and data center tenant Switch are funding the project.

Under a multi-jurisdictional agreement, the pipeline will take [treated water from the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Project in Sparks](#) and deliver it to the park. This will help keep the water treatment plant under its pollution caps because the treated effluent, rich in the nutrient pollution nitrogen, will stay out of the Truckee River.



[Doug Puppel](#) is a Las Vegas-based writer, consultant, and model represented by [TNG Agency](#). He and his wife, Pamela, are proud parents of two grown daughters.

Thousands graduate from higher ed. institutions

Both the University of Nevada, Reno and Truckee Meadows Community College are boasting healthy graduation rates of their students. More than 3,000 this past weekend received diplomas from UNR. TMCC on Friday is scheduled to issue nearly 1,400 associate degrees, more than 200 certificates of achievement and 30 bachelors degrees.

“This year, TMCC is also honoring an outstanding community member with the President’s Medal, the college’s highest honor that recognizes the recipient’s contributions toward the enhancement and achievement of TMCC’s mission of providing educational and public services to its students and to the community,” TMCC officials said.



“This year’s recipient is Chairman Arlan D. Melendez, who has served as the Chairman of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, a federally recognized Tribal Government representing Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe people for over 30 years. A veteran of the U.S Marine Corps, Chairman Melendez is also a graduate of Truckee Meadows Community College.”

UNR boasted more than 500 new business graduates and 70 new physicians graduating from the School of Medicine.

UNR recognized longtime veteran journalist Guy Clifton and philanthropist Carol Franc Buck as distinguished Nevadans. Carrie and Mary Dann, the sisters who battled the federal government over indigenous and ancestral Great Basin lands, were also [honored by UNR](#).

Business news briefs

Training for Nevada gardeners offered online. UNR Extension is offering two programs online for those interested in learning more about gardening in Nevada’s climates. The first program is the Home Horticulture Certificate Program, offered online Aug. 4 through Sept. 29. It will cover soils and plant nutrients, composting, native plants, small fruits and pest management. The cost is \$275.

[Information.](#)

Nevada System of Higher Education awarded \$20 million over five years for fire science research. The project is set to increase the capacity of Nevada for wildland fire research, education and workforce development. “This NSF award funds critical fire science research, which continues to be a priority for Nevada,” said DRI President Kumud Acharya.



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EWG finds over half of people surveyed think tap water is unsafe

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MAY 17, 2022

WASHINGTON – More than 50 percent of thousands of Americans surveyed by the Environmental Working Group say their tap water is unsafe and 40 percent won't or can't drink it. But even with widespread concern over tap water quality, nearly half of those surveyed are uncertain about who is responsible for protecting it.

Hundreds of people told us, correctly, they think either the Environmental Protection Agency or their state is responsible for setting limits on pollutants to keep tap water safe, or that no regulations exist to keep chemicals out of what they drink. But many are unsure which federal agency oversees safeguarding our water.

Those are findings from a recent survey of 2,800 visitors to EWG's landmark [Tap Water Database](https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/state-of-american-drinking-water.php), updated in late 2021. The database profiles the extent of drinking water pollution in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. We conducted the survey, in late April, to identify out how much they know about their tap water.

The findings could help not only guide the development of the next Tap Water Database update, slated for 2024, but also identify ways to strengthen communities' understanding of their drinking water – which could bolster calls for more steps to prevent water pollution.

EWG's Guide to Safe Drinking Water

Reduce your exposures to common drinking water pollutants with EWG's
handy tipsheet!

Reduce your exposures to common drinking water pollutants with EWG's handy tipsheet

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By downloading the guide, you'll also be subscribed to receive email updates - including the latest news, tips, action alerts, promotions and more - from EWG.

“It’s great to understand people’s level of engagement on drinking water,” said EWG Senior Scientist **Tasha Stoiber, Ph.D.** (<https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/our-experts/tasha-stoiber-phd>). “The survey answers will help shape how we write about and inform people about drinking water,

because they give us a sense of who is searching for information on their water, who wants to learn, and why,” she said.

Although EWG ran the survey for only a few days, responses came from 2,800 people in about 1,580 unique ZIP codes in all 50 states and D.C., and even some from Canada and Mexico. Roughly 2,770 people answered the first three questions – whether they consider their home’s tap water safe, whether they drink it, and where

it comes from – and 2,064 of the respondents went on to answer all seven questions we asked about tap water.

Just over 27 percent of people said they think it’s safe to drink water from the tap at home, with 51 percent saying it’s not. About one in five say they don’t know.

Only a quarter of respondents drink water straight from the tap, with almost 35 percent filtering water before drinking it. Forty percent refuse or are unable to consume it, and roughly the same percentage choose bottled water.

EWG recommends skipping bottled water (<https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/bottled-water-resources.php>) – it is more expensive and there is less transparency about it, compared to what comes out of the tap.

“It’s interesting to see from the results that many people do not trust their drinking water quality,” said EWG Environmental Health Fellow Uloma Uche, Ph.D.

(<https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/our-experts/uloma-uche-phd>).

Many are uncertain about who sets legal limits for pollutants. Many say the federal government is in charge. Only about a third of respondents say, correctly, it’s the EPA’s duty. About 21 percent correctly identified their state’s role in setting limits on chemicals in tap water.

Roughly 4 percent believe there are no limits on chemicals in water, and they’re correct, since tap water can legally be polluted by over 160 unregulated

contaminants.

But EWG scientists say what's remarkable is that almost 46 percent of respondents are "not sure" who sets limits for pollutants, and over 20 percent of people surveyed aren't sure of where the tap water in their home comes from.

"EWG would like to be a trusted tap water information provider," said [Olga Naidenko, Ph.D.](#) (<https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/our-experts/olga-naidenko-phd>), EWG's senior vice president for Science Investigations. "We want to create a community-level understanding of water as a resource for people, to build better engagement with the ultimate solution of pollution prevention and stricter regulation," she said.

By educating more Americans about where their tap water comes from, how it's regulated, and possible risks of drinking it without filtering, EWG can help foster a better understanding about the need for more action by states and for the federal government to do its part to keep harmful chemicals out of drinking water in every state, Naidenko said.

###

The Environmental Working Group is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that empowers people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. Through research, advocacy and unique education tools, EWG drives consumer choice and civic action.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

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

Who owns Lake Tahoe? A walkabout and talk-about

Pat Hickey and Sean Whaley

Published 5:00 p.m. PT May 17, 2022 | Updated 5:22 p.m. PT May 17, 2022

This opinion column was submitted by RGJ columnist Pat Hickey and Carson City-based writer Sean Whaley.

Does anyone own Lake Tahoe? Straddling five counties, two states and numerous overlapping forest jurisdictions — it's a hard question to answer.

I'd say the real "owners" are those who love the lake the most and behave as its best stewards. Besides, it's not as if we can do a title search going back 2 million years when erupting volcanoes plugged its outlets and retreating glaciers forced the lake to grow up in its granite nursery.

It's also true that many of those seeing Tahoe's spectacular shoreline end up wishing they could live there. Whether it was the Washoe Tribe camped inside their summer wikiups, or wealthy Californians enjoying their lakefront mansions, most everyone who visits dreams of living along its placid shores.

Having grown up in South Tahoe, being a local was a big deal. However, the original "locals" were the Washoe "the people from here" ("Washesu Itdeh"). One of their favorite midsummer camping spots for fishing, collecting berries and medicinal plants was Meeks Bay (named for the early mountain men who wrested the land from the Washoe).

Meeks Bay's sweeping curve of fine sand beach appears from a distance like a golden horseshoe. The beach's buttermilk crescent is frequently crowded with summertime beachgoers and extends for nearly a half mile toward Sugar Pine Point.

Ten years ago, the Washoe bestowed the name "Tahnu Leweh" on a portion of the lake's south shore, a welcoming phrase which means "all the people's place." They especially welcomed the first Lake Tahoe Summit in 1997, hosted by President Bill Clinton. When Brian Wallace, the Washoe tribal leader at the time, learned about the plans for the summit, he seized upon the

opportunity for his tribe to gain recognition. As Wallace said at the time, “You can’t talk about Tahoe without talking about the unfinished business with the Washoe Tribe.”

At the summit, Clinton asked Washoe elders what they wanted, and they replied, “Lake Tahoe.” While the president was not in a position to return the lake back to the Washoe, he understood the need to integrate their tribal values, culture and invaluable ecological knowledge into the Tahoe region. Under his direction, a 20-year special-use permit was granted to the tribe to co-manage hundreds of acres of the Tahoe region with the U.S Forest Service.

I visited with current Tribal Chairman Serrell Smokey and a group of Washoe elders who were blessing their Meeks Bay Resort prior to its seasonal opening. For Smokey, the Washoe goal is not just managing the resort at Meeks Bay — but eventually having “a bigger presence at Tahoe and getting back as much (land) as we can.”

Sean’s perspective as we leave the tribe’s resort: “Using a wonderful bike and walking path, we headed north to another one of our goals for the day: Ed Z’berg Sugar Pine Point State Park. The lake is not easily accessible on this stretch of Highway 89, with large and expensive private homes offering spectacular views. The private property versus public use challenge was front and center on our walk here, but with the biking and hiking trail, it was a pleasant journey to Sugar Pine Point. Here is where the public side of the equation has won out in a major way.

“The property had been acquired around the turn of the century by San Francisco businessman I.W. Hellman. His daughter, Florence Hellman Ehrman, inherited the land and estate. But thanks to the acquisition of 1,975 acres of the point by California State Parks in 1965, nearly two miles of Tahoe shoreline and the historic Hellman-Ehrman Mansion, a summer home built in 1903, now belong to the public. Stately cedars and sugar pines frame the grand mansion, set on a rise looking down toward the lake. The wide porch tempted us to remain to enjoy the sunny day. We finished up our journey at Tahoe City, where the Truckee River flows out of Lake Tahoe and begins its long journey to Pyramid Lake.”

Through the umbilical cord of Tahoe’s tributaries, the lake recycles itself every 700 years. What we allow into the lake will determine either its rebirth, or its demise. Whether the famed clarity of Lake Tahoe will always remain depends upon each of us. You know ... the lake’s “true owners,” those who love it the most like the Washoe people have shown us.

RGJ columnist Pat Hickey was a member of the Nevada Legislature from 1996 to 2016. Sean Whaley is a writer based in Carson City; he covered politics in Nevada's capital for various

news outlets from 1989 to 2017.

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

California is in a water crisis, yet usage is way up. Officials are focused on the wrong problem, advocates say

By **Rachel Ramirez, CNN**

🕒 Updated 8:50 AM ET, Sun May 15, 2022

(CNN) — California is facing a crisis. Not only are its reservoirs already at [critically low levels](#) due to unrelenting [drought](#), residents and businesses across the state are also using more water now than they have in seven years, despite Gov. Gavin Newsom's efforts to encourage just the opposite.

Newsom has pleaded with residents and businesses to reduce their water consumption by 15%. But in March, urban water usage was up by 19% compared to March 2020, the year the current drought began. It was the highest March water consumption since 2015, the [State Water Resources Control Board](#) reported earlier this week.

The West's megadrought

California's two largest reservoirs [are already at 'critically low levels'](#) and the dry season is just starting

A coastal commission rejected a \$1.4 billion desalination plant that [would have converted ocean water into municipal water](#)

[More human remains were discovered at Lake Mead](#) as the reservoir's water level plunges

[Why the Great American Lawn is terrible](#) for the West's water crisis

The Colorado River irrigates farms, powers electric grids and provides drinking water for 40 million people. [As its supply dwindles, a crisis looms](#)

Part of the problem is that the [urgency of the crisis](#) isn't breaking through to Californians. The messaging around water conservation varies across different authorities and jurisdictions, so people don't have a clear idea of what applies to whom. And they certainly don't have a tangible grasp on how much a 15% reduction is with respect to their own usage.

Kelsey Hinton, the communications director of [Community Water Center](#), a group advocating for affordable access to clean water, said that urban communities — which typically get water from the state's reservoirs — don't seem to understand the severity of the drought in the way that rural communities do, where water could literally stop flowing out of the tap the moment their groundwater reserves are depleted.

"In our work every day, people feel how serious this is, and know that we need to be working toward real solutions to address ongoing drought," Hinton told CNN. "But then living in Sacramento, you don't see the same urgency here because we're not reliant on groundwater and scarce resources in the same way that these communities are."

But advocates say government officials are also focusing on the wrong approach. They say voluntary residential water cuts are not the solution, and that restrictions should be mandated

for businesses and industries that use the vast majority of the state's water.

"Corporate water abuse has to be addressed or no other measures will matter," said Jessica Gable, a spokesperson for Food & Water Watch.

"The perception in California right now is it's no secret any longer that drought is linked with climate change," Gable told CNN. "But there has been no effort to curtail the industries that are using the most water, which are coincidentally the industries that are also sending out the most emissions that are fueling the climate crisis."

Onus misplaced

Most of March's spike in water usage came from water jurisdictions in Southern California. Usage in the South Coast [hydrologic region](#), which includes Los Angeles and San Diego County, was up 27% over March 2020, for example, according to data provided by the state's water board. Only the North Coast region saved water in March, cutting about 4.3% of its use.

[Audio](#) [Live TV](#) [Log In](#)

Edward Ortiz, spokesperson for the State Water Resources Control Board, said March was a huge setback for the governor's water goals.

"This is a concerning development in our response to the drought as a state," Ortiz told CNN. "Making water conservation a way of life is one way Californians can respond to these conditions. Saving water should be a practice whatever the weather."

He said Californians "need to redouble efforts to conserve water inside and outside of our homes and businesses."

Last month, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California announced its [most severe water restrictions](#) for residents and businesses in the counties around Los Angeles, with a goal of slashing water use by at least 35%. Beginning June 1, outdoor water usage will be limited to one day a week.

Sprinklers water fields in Kern County.

But community advocates say residents wonder whether big water users are also faced with the same pressure and painful decisions to conserve -- namely, agriculture that requires a large amount of water (things like almonds, alfalfa, avocado and tomatoes) or fracking, where tens of millions of gallons of water can be used to frack a single fossil fuel well.

Gable said that while every little bit matters, the repeated pleas for individuals to save water can "seem out of touch at best and possibly negligent," given that the industries that could drastically cut back on the excessive amount of water allocated to them are rarely held accountable.

Amanda Starbuck, research director with Food & Water Watch, said cutting back on residential water use is like telling people recycling could save the planet. While it's a meaningful action, she said it's not going to make a dent

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"It's also kind of a little bit demeaning to blame residential use for these crises," Starbuck told CNN. "It's just a small sliver of the overall consumption. It's a much bigger problem, and we really need to start bringing in these big industries that are guzzling water during this time of drought."

A spokesperson for Newsom's office told CNN that local water agencies have set new targets since March that should lead to lower usage — including the outdoor watering restriction — and more decisions are coming in front of the state board this month.

"We are hopeful these actions will significantly contribute to the state's overall water reduction goals as outdoor watering is one of the biggest single users of water," the spokesperson said in a statement.

The spokesperson also pointed to additional funding for water resiliency the governor announced in his budget proposal on Friday. That funding is part of \$47 billion slated to tackle the impacts of the climate crisis in the state.

"With the infusion of additional funding, we will be able to more effectively reach Californians about the need to conserve along with the biggest water saving actions they can take, and support local water districts in responding to the drought emergency," the spokesperson said.

Other sources are running dry

While much of the water conversation is focused on urban usage, Hinton said rural communities live with day-to-day anxiety that the water will stop flowing.

"The bigger story, at least for us, is when we are in the middle of drought like this, it's not just shorter showers and stopping outdoor water use for our families," Hinton told CNN. "Our families are worried that their water is just going to stop running all together."

These are communities that don't rely on reservoirs — where much of the focus has been for reaching critically low levels —but instead use private groundwater wells.

The big concern is that during extremely dry conditions, the state's groundwater levels sink while more is pulled up for agriculture and other uses.

"The urgency is there with the families we work with, because they know what's happened before," she said. "We have folks who have had wells dry up since the last drought and have still not been able to afford to deepen them or get connected to a long-term solution."

Blistering [heat waves](#), worsening [drought](#) and destructive [wildfires](#) have plagued the West in recent years. As these vivid images of climate crisis play out, Hinton believes the state needs to prioritize the water needs of individuals over industry.

"Climate change has made drought a reality for us forever, and now, this is something that we have to deal with as

a state," Hinton said. "And the more that we can accept that and be proactive, the less we're going to be

constantly reacting to these situations of entire communities going dry or of urban areas having to cut water to this amount because we've already overused what was available to us."

CNN's Cheri Mossburg, Sarah Moon, and Stephanie Elam contributed to this report.

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Home > News > Homelessness > **County reports drop in homelessness, more people sheltered**

HOMELESSNESS

County reports drop in homelessness, more people sheltered

By ThisIsReno | May 18, 2022

The number of people living homeless in Washoe County has declined by 10% since last year according to data released this week from the annual Point In Time count.

Despite the drop, there was still a 30% increase in people living homeless since before the pandemic and many more people are living in shelters or transitional housing.

The annual Point In Time, or PIT, count measures the number of people experiencing homelessness one date each year. The result of the count is a snapshot in time that provides information on self-reported demographics and living conditions – sheltered or unsheltered homeless.

This year's PIT count came a month late, on Feb. 24 rather than late January as is traditional, due to the COVID-19 omicron surge.

A total 1,605 people were counted as homeless, with the majority – 1,188 – sheltered. The remaining 417 were counted as unsheltered, meaning they were living on the street, in tents or in cars.

Since the 2021 PIT count, the Nevada Cares Campus has increased its capacity to 604 beds, which is an additional 235 beds. Between the 2021 and 2022 PIT count the number of sheltered people increased nearly the same amount – 260 people.

County officials also noted that the count was conducted on one of the coldest nights of the year when the overnight low was 13 degrees and an additional 52 cots were set up in the emergency shelter. They said, may be one reason more people were counted as sheltered this year than in years past.

More data from this year's PIT count is at

https://www.washoecounty.gov/homeless/CoC/point_in_time_count-pit.php.



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Water flowing through the Walker River in August 2019. (David Calvert/The Nevada Independent)

Indy Environment: Everyone in Nevada is talking about water. Here are five things to know.

Good morning, and welcome to the Indy Environment newsletter.

As always, we want to hear from readers. Let us know what you're seeing on the ground and how policies are affecting you. Email me with any tips at daniel@thenvindy.com

If you received this from a friend, [sign-up here](#) to receive it in your inbox.

“There’s no telling what we’ll find in Lake Mead,” former Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman [told the Associated Press](#) earlier this month. Goodman, the storied mob attorney turned mayor, was talking about the bodies discovered at Lake Mead as water levels have declined.

But Lake Mead’s historic decline has revealed more uncomfortable realities than just this one. If the lake was already a symbol for the West’s water issues, now it is even more stark.

context about where our water comes from in Nevada — and the solutions moving forward.

1. What about our neighbors to the West? Is California using all our water? Are we selling our water to California? Not exactly. With the exception of the Humboldt River, most of the surface water in Nevada — that is, the water that flows down rivers and streams — originates as snow elsewhere. In the case of Western Nevada, much of the water that irrigates farms in Yerington or supplies drinking water to Reno, actually originates in California. The Walker River and the Truckee River, respectively, run off the mountains on the other side of the state line. In the case of Las Vegas, which gets its water from the Colorado River, the story is well known: Tributaries snake their way across the Southwest, but most of the precipitation that makes the river run falls in the Rockies. Water use on these rivers was divided up, often overallocated, a long time ago.

In the case of the Colorado River, the water flowing downstream is not being sold to California or given away. California has the largest share of Colorado River water and some of the highest priority rights to use it (water rights generally function on a “first in time, first in right” basis). **Can California take actions to better manage water in a way that benefits Nevada? Certainly.** And in fact, the Southern Nevada Water Authority is one of several water districts working with Southern California cities on a recycling project that could free up more water in Lake Mead.

2. The context is written in history and rights: When I interview water managers, they are always quick to point out that every watershed — the Walker, the Carson, the Humboldt, the Truckee, the Owyhee, the Amargosa, the Colorado — is different and people should be wary about drawing comparisons. There is some truth to this. Different rules govern the way water is used and allocated across these river systems. **That said, there is one similarity that stands out: Most of these watersheds are governed by a series of rights, agreements, laws and rules — in some cases, court decrees — that distribute power and authority across many different jurisdictions and layers of governance.** There is rarely one decision-maker on any given river, and that means solutions to water problems do not often come with the wave of a magic wand. They take hard work, discussion and collaboration. They are revealed over time.

History and time play a critical role, one that they do not play when discussing other natural resources. “First in time, first in right.” Water users with a legal priority to use water during scarcity are often those with the oldest water rights — those who claimed water rights first in time. As a result, the most “senior” rights (the term water managers use) often (though not always) belong to Native American tribes and agricultural communities in a watershed.

3. Our climate is changing our water cycle: “The worst I’ve seen. The worst I’ve seen.” This refrain has been repeated to me, over and over, the past two years when I’ve been out reporting on water. The changing climate is making drought more pronounced and extreme. Those who spend a lot of time on the landscape, who have lived through variations, can see the impacts up close. **Scientists, too, have documented the way climate change has affected streamflow, particularly in the Colorado River, which supplies water to much of the Southwest. But it’s not only precipitation and supply that is changing.** There is a whole system of variables.

Prolonged drought is drying out soils, soaking up water and making runoff — the process by which snow runs off into rivers — less efficient. Consider wildfire. More intense wildfires have large-scale impacts on watersheds and the headwaters of many river systems. And increased temperature has contributed to a thirstier atmosphere, as [climate researchers recently showed](#).

suggested to me that all the west needs to do is build a pipeline from the Mississippi River... [and it actually has been studied](#). Arizona is taking augmentation seriously. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has proposed a [\\$1 billion allocation to seek new water supplies](#) over the next three years. That number tells you a lot about what you need to know. **Finding new water is not cheap and not a short-term plan.**

In Nevada, the augmentation discussion has mostly centered around the Colorado River. And although the most imaginative projects seem to involve piping water from here to there, a lot of the augmentation projects that are currently being pursued focus on reducing demand to free up water for someone else. **That is the concept behind desalinization or Southern California's recycling project, [which Nevada has invested in](#) and could free up Colorado River water.**

Still, there's a reason that water managers are [talking about conservation](#) — even paying their customers to replace irrigated landscape. Reducing water demand can stretch a supply in a cost-effective way, especially in an urban context. And it can be done on a much faster scale.

5. We have lived with scarcity for a long-time: Nevada is the driest state in the nation. It is the driest state in a region that is shaped by its aridity. Nevada has lived with scarcity and very little water. **What that means is that water managers here have thought about these issues for a long time.** Las Vegas, due in part to scarcity and a meager Colorado River allocation, has already implemented indoor recycling of water and aggressive conservation incentives. It is not perfect and there are arguments to be made about growth, but it is [seen as an example in the West](#). The same is true in other parts of Nevada. Compared to other states, groundwater use in Nevada is far more regulated. Scarcity has long forced tough conversations about water use — and in many places, they are not getting easier. There are difficult choices, and many will not result in the types of win-wins that politicians like to tout. **But aridity here is not new. And if recognizing the reality is the first step, Nevada is a step ahead of many other states.**



A Greater sage-grouse male "lekking" near Bridgeport, California. (Jeannie Stafford/USFWS)

Here's what else I'm watching this week:

On Tuesday, a **federal judge struck down a U.S. Fish and Wildlife decision** that found the bi-state sage grouse, a subpopulation of the Greater sage grouse, did not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act, [Courthouse News Services' Carson McCullough reported.](#)

Local, state and federal officials implement fire restrictions in Clark County, [KSNV reports.](#)

- The National Science Foundation awarded the Nevada System of Higher Education a \$20 million grant, over five years, to study wildfire. The research will involve the Desert Research Institute, UNLV and UNR. [According to a press release](#), “the overarching goal of the project is to increase the capacity of Nevada for wildland fire research, education and workforce development, and to demonstrate this increased capacity through technology-enhanced fire science in the regionally important sagebrush ecosystem.”
- [The Reno Gazette Journal's Amy Alonzo](#) on **what we people can do to prevent fires.**

The White House released an [interesting readout](#) of a stakeholder meeting **focused on reform of the General Mining Law of 1872**, which allows mining companies to operate on public land without paying royalties and has been criticized as outdated. Top executives from Barrick and Newmont were at the meeting. Members of Earthworks, an environmental group, also attended.

I-80 Gold will trade on the New York Stock Exchange, [Mining.com reports.](#)

The Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park, located in central Nevada, will reopen, [The Reno Gazette Journal reports.](#)

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Los Angeles Times

Newsom urges aggressive water conservation and warns of statewide restrictions

**Ian James**

May 23, 2022 · 5 min read

In this article:**Gavin Newsom**
Governor of California

Gov. Gavin Newsom met with leaders of the state's largest urban water suppliers Monday and implored them to step up efforts to get people to reduce water use as California's drought continues to worsen. He warned that if conservation efforts don't improve this summer, the state could be forced to impose mandatory water restrictions throughout the state.

Ten months ago, Newsom called for Californians to [voluntarily cut water use 15%](#), but the state remains far from that goal.

The latest conservation figures have been especially poor. Water use in cities and towns [increased by nearly 19%](#) in March, an especially warm and dry month. Compared with a 2020 baseline, statewide cumulative water savings since July have amounted to just 3.7%.

"Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions to communicate about the drought emergency and implement conservation measures," Newsom said in a statement. "Californians made significant changes since the last drought but we have seen an uptick in water use, especially as we enter the summer months. We all have to be more thoughtful about how to make every drop count."



Alicia De Mello waters her frontyard in in South Pasadena. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

For part of the 2012-16 drought, then-Gov. Jerry Brown ordered a mandatory 25% reduction in urban water use. Many Californians responded by cutting back and taking steps such as converting lawns to drought-tolerant plants.

Local water agencies told state officials they preferred an approach that allowed for greater flexibility and would be more tailored to their local situations. Newsom has favored a locally driven approach. But the governor's office said in a [statement](#) that Newsom "voiced concerns today given recent conservation levels around the state."

"Gov. Newsom warned that if this localized approach to conservation does not result in a significant reduction in water use statewide this summer, the state could be forced to enact mandatory restrictions," his office said. "The governor

will reconvene these same agencies in the next two months to provide an update."

ENVIRONMENT

'Everyone loses': Sacramento Valley struggles to survive unprecedented water cuts



BY RACHEL BECKER
MAY 23, 2022



The drought has stunted grasses that Josh Davy's cattle usually feed on so he prepares hay for them at his ranch near Red Bluff. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

CAL MATTERS IN SUMMARY

Sacramento Valley growers protected for decades by their water rights are suffering for the first time during this record-breaking drought.

Wildlife refuges are struggling, too.

Standing on the grassy plateau where water is piped onto his property, Josh Davy wished his feet were wet and his irrigation ditch full.

Three years ago, when he sank everything he had into 66 acres of irrigated pasture in Shasta County, Davy thought he'd drought-proofed his cattle operation.

He'd been banking on the Sacramento Valley's water supply, which was guaranteed even during the deepest of droughts almost 60 years ago, when irrigation districts up and down the valley cut a deal with the federal government. Buying this land was his insurance against droughts expected to intensify with climate change.

But this spring, for the first time ever, no water is flowing through his pipes and canals or those of his neighbors: The district won't be delivering any water to Davy or any of its roughly 800 other customers.

Without rain for rangeland grass where his cows forage in the winter, or water to irrigate his pasture, he will probably have to sell at least half the cows he's raised for breeding and sell all of his calves a season early. Davy expects to lose money this year – more than \$120,000, he guesses, and if it happens again next year, he won't be able to pay his bills.

"I would never have bought (this land) if I had known it wasn't going to get water. Not when you pay the price you pay for it," he said. "If this is a one-time fluke, I'll suck it up and be fine. But I don't have another year in me."

CalMatters water and drought tracker**1273****HOUSEHOLDS
REPORTING
WATER
STORAGE IN
PAST 365 DAYS**

Since 1964, the water supply of the Western Sacramento Valley has been virtually guaranteed, even during critically dry years, the result of an arcane water rights system and legal agreements underlying operations of the Central Valley Project, the federal government's massive water management system.

But as California weathers a third year of drought, conditions have grown so dry and reservoirs so low that the valley's landowners and irrigation districts are being forced to give up more water than ever before. Now, this region, which has relied on [the largest portion of federally-managed water](#) flowing from Lake Shasta, is wrestling with what to do as its deal with the federal government no longer protects them.



An irrigation canal on Davy's pasture in Shasta County is bone-dry on April 27, 2022. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

All relying on the lake's supplies will make sacrifices: Many are struggling to keep their cattle and crops. Refuges for wildlife also will have to cope with less water from Lake Shasta, [endangering migratory birds](#). And the eggs of [endangered salmon](#) that depend on cold water released from Shasta Dam are expected to die by the millions.

For decades, water wars have pitted growers and ranchers against nature, north against south. But in this new California, where everyone is suffering, no one is guaranteed anything. "In the end, when one person wins, everybody loses," Davy said. "And we don't actually solve the problem."

Portioning out the river's precious water

This parched valley was once a land of floods, regularly inundated when the Sacramento River overflowed to turn grasslands and riverbank forests into a vast, seasonal lake.

Settlers that flooded into California on the tide of the Gold Rush of 1849 [staked their claims](#) to the river's flow [with notices posted to trees](#) in a system of "[first in time, first in right](#)."

The river was corralled by levees, the region replumbed with drainage ditches and irrigation canals. Grasslands and swamps lush with tules turned to ranches and wheat fields, then to orchards, irrigated pasture and rice.

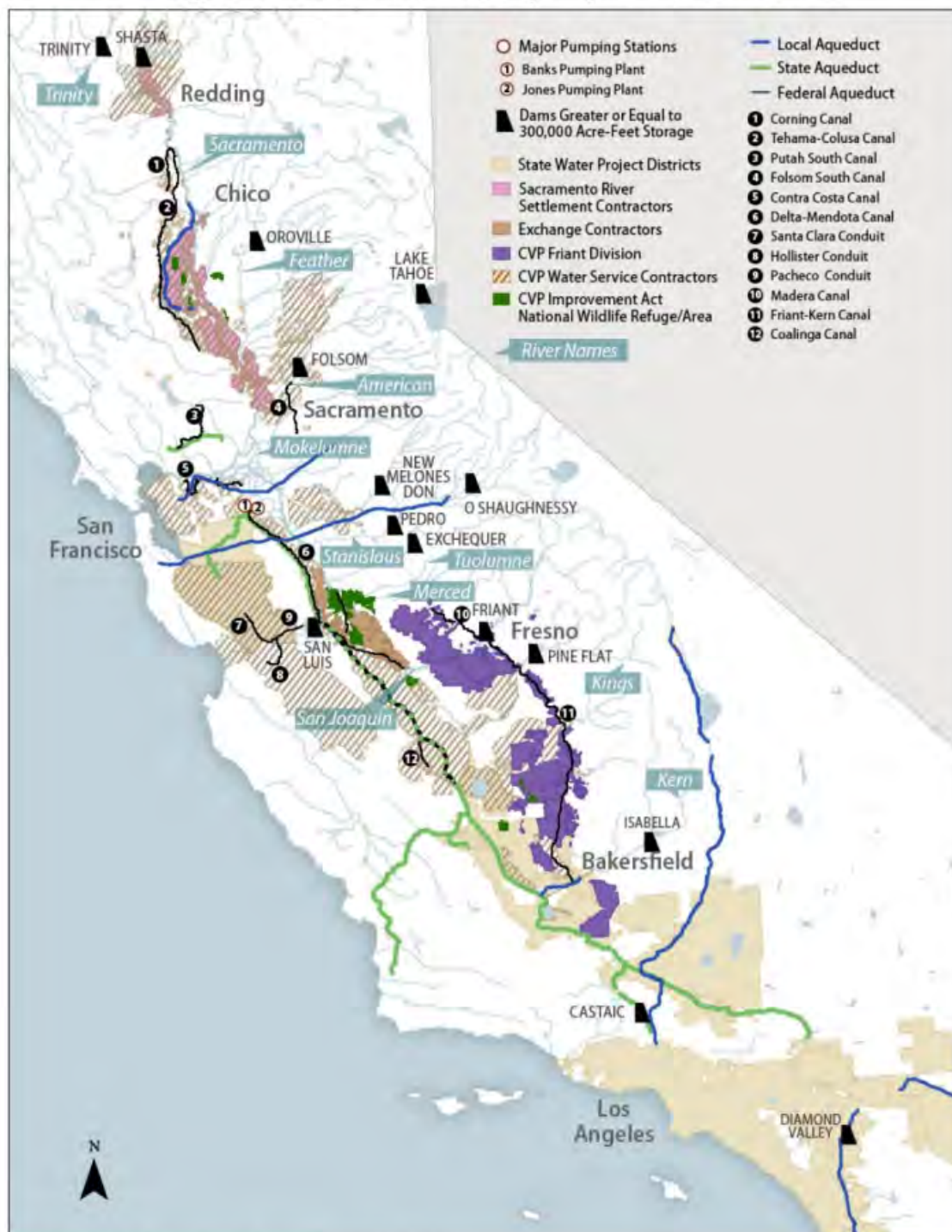
The federal government [took over in the 1930s](#), when it began building the Central Valley Project's Shasta Dam, which [displaced the Winnemem Wintu people](#). A 20-year negotiation between water rights holders and the US Bureau of Reclamation culminated in a deal in 1964.

Today, under the agreements, which were renewed in 2005, nearly 150 landowners and irrigation districts that supply almost half a million acres of agriculture in the western Sacramento Valley are entitled to receive about three times more water than Los Angeles and San Francisco use in a year.

It's a controversial amount in the parched state. Before this year, the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, as they're called, received the [largest portion](#) of the federally-managed supply of water that flows from Shasta Lake. It's [more](#) than cities receive, more than wildlife refuges, more even than other powerful agricultural suppliers like the Westlands Water District farther south.

Their contract bars the irrigation districts' supply from being cut by more than a quarter in critically dry years. During the last drought in 2014, federal efforts to cut it to 40% of the contracted amount were met with resistance, and deliveries ultimately increased to the full 75% allocation for the dry year.

But this year, facing exceptionally dry conditions, the irrigation districts negotiated with state and federal agencies, and [agreed in March](#) to reduce their water deliveries to 18%. Other agricultural suppliers with less senior rights are set to [get nothing](#).

Figure 1. Central Valley Project (CVP) and Related Facilities

Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: Colored areas are based on water and irrigation district boundaries and do not correspond to the amount of water delivered from the Central Valley Project or the State Water Project. For example, some large areas have relatively small contracts for water compared with other, smaller areas.

Map source: Congressional Research Service (CRS)



Low water levels at Shasta Lake on April 25, 2022.

Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Growers understand that they have to sacrifice some water this year, said Thaddeus Bettner, general manager for Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, the largest of the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors and one of the largest irrigation districts in the state. But he wondered why irrigation districts in the Western Sacramento Valley draw so much of the blame.

"I understand we're bigger than everybody so we catch the focus," Bettner said. "We're just trying to survive this year. Frankly, it's just complete devastation up here. And it's unfortunate that the view seems to be that we should get hurt even more to save fish."

Cutting deliveries to growers means that more water can flow through the rivers, which slightly raises the chances for more [endangered winter-run Chinook salmon](#) to survive this year.

"They had the water rights to take 75% of their allocation instead of 18%, and we were anticipating another total bust," said [Howard Brown](#), senior policy advisor with NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region. "One hundred percent temperature dependent mortality (of salmon eggs) would not have been something out of reason to imagine."

Yet [more than half of the eggs](#) of endangered winter-run Chinook salmon are expected to still die this year, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

State and federal biologists are racing to move some of the adult salmon to [a cooler tributary](#) of the Sacramento River and a hatchery.

"We're spreading the risk around, and putting our eggs in different baskets," Brown said. "The animal that's on the flag of California is extinct. How many can we afford to lose before we lose our identity as people and as citizens of California?"

'Nothing like I thought I'd ever see' in the Sacramento Valley

In any other year, Davy would run his cattle on rain-fed rangeland he leases in Tehama County until late spring before moving the herd to his home pasture, kept green and lush with spring and summer irrigation.

Davy, who grew up roping and running cattle, supports his career as a full-time rancher with his other full-time job as a farm advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension, specializing in livestock, rangelands and natural resources.

Three years ago, he sold his home in Cottonwood, on the Shasta-Tehama county line, for a fixer-upper nearby with holes in the floor, a shoddy electrical system and windows that wouldn't close. This fixer-upper had two inarguable selling points: a view of Mount Shasta and water from the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, a settlement contractor.

This year, without rain, the grass where his cows forage through the winter crunches underfoot. "This grass should be up to my waist right now," Davy said, readying a chute he would soon use to transport his cattle. He unloaded hay from his pickup to feed the cows and calves until he could move them – unheard of, he said, in April.



Davy prepares to feed his cattle near Red Bluff on April 25, 2022. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters



Cattle feed on hay in Tehama County. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Forty miles away, his pasture, green from the April rains, is faring a little better – but the green can't last without irrigation. Thinking about it too hard makes Davy feel sick.

"I try to stick to what I can get done today, and then assume next year I'll be okay. I think that's the mantra for agriculture," he said: "Next year will be better."

About 75 miles south of Davy's ranch, rangeland and irrigated pastures open up to orchards and thousands of acres of empty rice fields.

"Nothing like I thought I'd ever see," said Mathew Garcia, gazing at one of his dry rice fields in Glenn, about an hour and a half north of Sacramento.

In any other year, he would have been preparing to seed and flood the crumbled clay. This year, he had to abandon even the one field he'd planned to irrigate from a well. The ground was too thirsty to hold the water.

Garcia's water comes from two different irrigation districts with settlement contracts. This year, the roughly 420 acres he farms will see water deliveries either eliminated or too diminished to plant rice. He'll funnel the water instead to his tenant's irrigated pasture where cattle graze.

"Without the water, we have dirt. It's basically worthless," Garcia said. "It's very depressing."

**"Without the water, we have dirt.
It's basically worthless."**

– MATHEW GARCIA, RICE FARMER

California is [one of the main rice⁹ producers](#) in the United States, and [almost all is grown](#) in the Sacramento Valley. It's [an⁹especially water-demanding crop](#): The plants and evaporation drink up about two-thirds of the flows; the rest dribbles through the earth to refill groundwater stores or flows

[back into irrigation ditches](#) that supply other crops, rivers and wetlands.

Garcia places some of the blame on the weather. But he also blames federal regulators, who allow water to flow from the reservoirs year-round for fish, wildlife and water quality.

"Everybody says well, you shouldn't farm in the desert. Does this look like a desert to you? No. It looks like fertile, beautiful farmland with the most amazing irrigation system that's ever been put in. And they're just taking the water from it. They're creating a desert."

In the depths of California's last historic drought from 2012 through 2016, Garcia could still plant his fields. Even with last year's reduced water deliveries, he planted – filling the gaps in water supply by pumping from his groundwater wells.

Garcia will survive this year: He credits his wife's foresight to purchase crop insurance years ago. Without it, he said, he'd be done – he'd have to sell land, maybe find another job.

"If this drought sustains, I don't know how long insurance is going to last. And then at what point do you throw in the towel?" said Garcia. "There's a teetering point somewhere. Everybody's is different. I don't know where mine is yet."



Mathew Garcia, standing in one of his fallowed rice fields in Glenn, says he can't plant anything this year because of reduced water deliveries. Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Local water suppliers anticipate about 370,000 acres of cropland will go fallow in the western Sacramento Valley, the result of diminished deliveries to the settlement contractors. Most lie in [Colusa](#) and [Glenn](#) counties, where agriculture is the epicenter of the economy. Money and jobs radiate from the fields to the crop dusters and chemical suppliers, rice driers and warehouses.

And, like the water, jobs for farm workers have dried up.

For nine years, Sergio Cortez has been traveling from Jalisco, Mexico to work in Sacramento Valley fields. This is the driest he's ever seen it, and he knows that next year could be worse.

"Aquí el agua es todo, pues," he said. "Al no haber agua, pues no hay trabajo." Water is everything, he said. If there's no water, there's no work.

The parking lot at the migrant farmworker housing in Colusa County where Cortez and his family live for part of the year was full of cars and pickups that would normally be parked at the fields. Cortez hadn't worked in two days.

For Adolfo Morales Martinez, 74, it had been a month since he worked. And, at the end of April, his unemployment benefits were about to end.

"Desesperados. Estamos desesperados," he said. "Pues en el campo gana uno poquito, no? Y sin nada? No mas." We're desperate, he said. In the fields, he can earn a little. But now, nothing.

Normally Morales Martinez drives a tractor, readying rice fields for planting. Now it's like a desert, his wife, Alma Galavez, said.

"Eso está desértico, vea. Todo. Nada, Nada. Está feo y triste," she said. There's nothing. It's ugly and sad.

Extreme effects on salmon and birds, too

Environmental advocates and California tribes have been fighting the growers' and irrigation districts' claim to California's finite water supply for years, citing inadequate water to maintain [water quality and temperatures](#)⁹ for endangered fish and the Delta.

"People who have built their farms in the desert, or in areas where their water has to be exported to them, need to think about changing. Because that's what's killing the state," said [Caleen Sisk](#), chief and spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu, whose lands were flooded with the damming of Lake Shasta.

To Sisk, the salmon that once spawned in the tributaries above the Central Valley signal the region's health. "If there are no salmon, there will be no people soon."

Federal scientists estimate that last year about [three-quarters of 9 endangered winter-run Chinook salmon eggs died](#) because the water downstream of a depleted Lake Shasta was too warm. Only about 3% of the salmon ultimately survived to migrate downriver.

"It's been clear for decades that there was a need to reduce diversions," said Doug Obegi, senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"The consequences are just becoming more and more extreme."

In 2020, [California sued the Trump administration](#) over what it said were flawed federal assessments for how the Central Valley Project's operations harm endangered species.

The judge sent the federal plans back for more work and approved what he called a "reasonable interim approach" that called for prioritizing fish and public safety over irrigation districts. He called the contracts an "800 pound gorilla" that "make it exceedingly and increasingly difficult" for the federal government to be "sufficiently protective of winter-run (salmon)."

US Bureau of Reclamation spokesperson Gary Pitzer said the agency worked with the districts to reach an agreement on how much water to deliver because "it's the right thing to do, particularly during drought – one of the worst on record."

Environmental advocacy groups [applauded the reduced allocations](#)⁹ to the Sacramento Valley irrigation districts. But they also raised concerns that other irrigation districts with similar contracts elsewhere in the state would still see their full dry year allocations, and cautioned that the temperatures will still kill salmon by the scores this year.

"There's not a lot of places for these birds to go. The Sacramento Valley has always been the bankable piece."

– CURTIS MCCASLAND, SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX

Wildlife refuges where birds can rest and eat during [their 4,000-mile⁹ winter journeys along the Pacific Flyway](#) also are receiving significantly less water this year.

Curtis McCasland, manager of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, expects less than half a typical year's water supply to be delivered to the refuges this year – cobbled together from purchased water supplies, federal deliveries and, he hopes, storm flows this winter.

North of Sacramento, the five refuges in the complex are painstakingly tended wilderness in a sea of agriculture. More than a century ago, wetlands fanned out for miles to either side of the flood-prone Sacramento River. Now, [more than 90% of the state's wetlands are gone](#), drained for fields, homes, and businesses. Those remaining in these refuges now depend on water flowing from Shasta Dam and shunted through irrigation canals.

At the end of April, the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge offered an oasis among the barren rice fields, which normally provide about [two-thirds of](#)

[the migrating bird's calories](#). Dark green bulrushes rose from shallow ponds where shorebirds jackhammered their bills in and out of the muck.

McCasland knows all this lush green can't last. As he steered an SUV past black-necked stilts picking their way through the water and ducklings paddling ferociously, he braced for another dry year.

"Instead of being those postage stamps in a sea of rice, we're going to be postage stamps in a sea of fallow fields," McCasland said.



An American bittern feeds at the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge on April 28, 2022. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

In a typical year, the refuge wetlands that depend on federal water get much less water than the settlement contractors are entitled to – about 4% of the total, McCasland estimates. And he worries that this year, whatever water they do receive won't be enough to keep all these birds fed and healthy.

More than a million birds descend on the refuges every winter to rest and find food. [More](#) stop in the surrounding rice fields, which are largely dry this year.

"In years where Shasta is at a normal or average level, it should be no problem to get us the water," he said. "In years like this, certainly it's going to be terribly difficult."

The drought may already have taken a toll. Last November, only 745,000 birds landed in the refuge, a decrease of more than 700,000 from November of 2019, although some may have remained farther north because of unseasonably balmy weather there.

The refuges are like a farm, where McCasland and his colleagues carefully cultivate tule, shrubs and grasses with pulses of summertime irrigations. With less water this summer, these wintertime food sources for birds will dry and shrivel. And with less water during the peak of fall and winter migrations, hungry birds will be packed together in the few remaining marshes – raising the risk of outbreaks from diseases like [avian botulism](#) or cholera.

"There's not a lot of places for these birds to go," he said. "The Sacramento

Valley has always been the bankable piece....They do have wings, they may be able to move through." But, he added, "the question is, what happens next?"

CalMatters Photo Editor Miguel Gutierrez contributed to this story.

[MORE ON DROUGHT](#)

Can science transform California crops to cope with drought?

The search is on to help California farmers find less-thirsty tree crops. But will the "Torture Orchard" experiments come through in time as droughts intensify?



by Julie Cart SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

6 million Southern Californians face unprecedented order to conserve water

The giant Metropolitan Water District imposed first-ever restrictions today. Some suppliers in Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties will limit watering of lawns to once a week to ease the burden on the drought-stricken state aqueduct.



by Rachel Becker APRIL 26, 2022

**BREAKING NEWS:**

2022 California Wildfire Preparedness Guide: What to know and how to stay safe

California State Water Board adopts new emergency water conservation regulations

Updated: 7:22 PM PDT May 24, 2022

Infinite Scroll Enabled

**Leticia Ordaz**

Anchor/Reporter

Calls for water conservation in California haven't worked.

Now Gov. Gavin Newsom is threatening mandatory water restrictions if Californians don't start using less water on their own.

On Tuesday, the State Water Resources Control Board voted to adopt emergency water conservation regulations to boost water savings starting in June.

The new regulations ban irrigating turf at commercial, industrial, and institutional properties. For example, grass in large industrial or commercial buildings. The ban does not apply to watering turf that is used for recreation or other community purposes, water used at residences, or water used to maintain trees.

The regulation also requires all urban water suppliers to implement conservation actions under “Level 2” of their “Water Storage Contingency Plans.”

For some water districts, that won't be a change.

“The city of Sacramento has been in stage two of its plan since August of 2021,” Carlos Eliason, spokesperson for the city of Sacramento's Department of Utilities told KCRA 3.

The goal of Level 2 water shortage contingency plans is to address up to a 20% shortage of water supplies, something some water agencies aren't tackling yet.

Both the Level 2 restrictions and watering rules from the State Water Resources Control Board will go into effect June 10.

Tuesday's vote came on the heels of Newsom's announcement [Monday that mandatory water restrictions could be implemented statewide](#).

The state's water use went up 19% in March of this year compared to March 2020.

Last July, the governor called for a 15% voluntary reduction in water use, but the state hasn't reached that goal yet.

Leaders with the state tell KCRA 3 that the decision regarding statewide mandatory restrictions will be reassessed in 60 days.

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Some boat ramps closed in Lake Tahoe this summer



By [Karlie Drew](#)
Published: May. 24, 2022 at 6:03 AM PDT

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RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - With the holiday weekend coming up a lot of people are expected in Lake Tahoe for boating and other summer activities. But, there are a few boat ramps that will be closed this weekend that could impact plans.

Because of the lack of precipitation, a majority of boat ramps in Lake Tahoe will be closed this summer. Even with the winter weather we had just a few weeks ago, it only raised the lake about an inch.

The boat ramps that will be closed this season are Sand Harbor, El Dorado, Kings Beach, and Tahoe Vista Recreation Area.

Tahoe’s Region Manager, Allen Woodridge, said water levels would have to rise at least a foot for motorized vehicles to safely launch. Woodridge said Lake Tahoe’s current levels are the same as they were last July.

“Right now, the lake is sitting at 6224.5. That’s when we closed last year. The storms we had over the winter weren’t enough to replenish Lake Tahoe, and we’re sitting at the same level and it’s nowhere near enough to be able to launch vessels safely without any ecological damage,” Woodridge explained.

Cave Rock is one of the ramps that will be open this season. It is recommended boaters prepare for open ramps to be busy.

For more information about boat ramps that are open, click [here](#).

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NATIONAL

EXPLAINER: How cities in the West have water amid drought

BY SUMAN NAISHADHAM ASSOCIATED PRESS

MAY 26, 2022 4:32 PM



FILE - Pipes extend into Lake Mead well above the high water mark near Boulder City, Nev., on March 23, 2012. The sight of fountains, swimming pools, gardens and golf courses in Western cities like Phoenix, Los Angeles, Las

Vegas, San Diego and Albuquerque can seem jarring with drought and climate change tightening their grip on the region. But Western water experts say they aren't necessarily cause for concern. Many Western cities over the past three decades have diversified their water sources, boosted local supplies, and use water more efficiently now than in the past. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson, File) JULIE JACOBSON AP



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As drought and climate change tighten their grip on the American West, the sight of fountains, swimming pools, gardens and golf courses in cities like Phoenix, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Boise, and Albuquerque can be jarring at first glance.

Western water experts, however, say they aren't necessarily cause for concern. Over the past three decades, major Western cities — particularly in California and Nevada — have diversified their water sources, boosted local supplies through infrastructure investments and conservation, and use water more efficiently.

Peter Gleick, president emeritus of the Pacific Institute, has studied water resources for decades. He calls the reduction in per capita water use a “remarkable story” and one that’s not widely acknowledged.

“That’s a huge success throughout the West,” Gleick said. “All of the cities in the West have made progress.”

But with less water flowing into the Colorado River, which serves 40 million people in the West and northern Mexico, experts say the measures taken by cities will still not be enough long-term.

Here's a look at how Western cities have prepared for a future with less water.

WHERE DO WESTERN CITIES GET THEIR WATER?

Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Diego, Los Angeles, Denver, Salt Lake City, Tucson, Albuquerque and other Western cities use water from the 1,450-mile (2,334 kilometer) Colorado River for residential and commercial needs.

Overuse of the river, hotter temperatures, less melting snow in the spring, and evaporation have greatly reduced water flows in the river — by 20% on average since 2000.

Agriculture remains the single-largest consumer, using 70% of available water in the Colorado River basin, according to the Bureau of Reclamation.

While the river remains the lifeblood of the region, many cities have other water sources. That's due to spending billions of dollars over decades on infrastructure aimed at withstanding a future with less reliable water sources.

“It really has to do with the modern engineering marvels of the 20th and 21st centuries,” said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles. “This is sort of the perennial story of the West.”

Los Angeles imports the bulk of its water through a vast storage and delivery system. Its water sources include the Sierra Nevada mountains in Northern California, the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and the Colorado River in the east. It also uses some groundwater and recycled water.

“Los Angeles is less vulnerable,” Gleick said, “because they do have this very broad, diverse set of options.”

Still, Southern California's behemoth water supplier last month ordered about 6 million people to cut their outdoor watering to once a week due to record dry conditions. The Metropolitan Water District said a total ban on outdoor watering in the affected areas could follow in September if the restrictions don't work.

The lion's share of Las Vegas' water supply comes from the Colorado River. The agency serving the city of 2.4 million, its suburbs and 40 million annual visitors gets 90% of its water from the river and 10% from groundwater.

Nevada lost 7% of its share of Colorado River water this year as part of cuts announced by Reclamation, but Las Vegas was shielded from the effects thanks to water conservation and reuse.

“It’s fair to say that Las Vegas has taken the most dramatic steps to reduce its dependence on Colorado River water,” said Anne Castle, a senior fellow at the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy and the Environment.

San Diego’s water wholesaler gets two-thirds of its supplies from the Colorado River, but has sought other water sources since the early ’90s. The San Diego County Water Authority gets 10% of its water from a \$1 billion desalination plant that removes salt and impurities from seawater. The city has also conserved more water and cut per-person use while its population has grown.

Phoenix, the nation’s fifth largest city, relies on imported Colorado River water, too. It also gets water from the in-state Salt and Verde Rivers, which are nowhere as challenged as the Colorado River, said Sarah Porter, director of the Kyl Center for Water Policy at Arizona State University. Phoenix also uses sterilized wastewater for limited uses, like maintaining parks and recharging some aquifers with groundwater.

Arizona was the hardest-hit among Western states losing Colorado River water this year, with 18% of its supply gone. But cities were spared from that round of cuts. Officials in Phoenix say they have enough water to weather future cuts because of diversified supplies and water saved and stored underground.

HAS CONSERVATION BOLSTERED WESTERN CITIES’ WATER SUPPLIES?

Yes. There may be no better example than Las Vegas. Sin City’s fountains, swimming pools, and showers use recycled water. About 40% of the Southern Nevada Water Authority’s water supply is for indoor use. Once used, much of that wastewater is treated and then returned to Lake Mead, the reservoir behind Hoover Dam, before it is drawn and used again.

Las Vegas started conserving, reusing and recycling water in 1999. Since 2002, the Southern Nevada Water Authority has slashed its use of Colorado River water by 26% while the region’s population grew by 49%.

In 2003, the water authority banned front yard lawns in new subdivisions. Grass was prohibited in new commercial developments. Last year, Nevada outlawed what it called ‘non-functional turf’ in the Las Vegas area, or grass used at office

parks, in street meridians and at entrances to housing developments. Officials said the measure could save an amount equal to 10% of its Colorado River allocation.

Not all cities and states have acted with the same urgency. Phoenix does not offer rebates to tear out grass. Utah only recently passed a turf buyback measure.

In California, urban water use has steadily dropped since peaking in 2007, according to the Pacific Institute. Much of that progress is from repairing leaks, replacing lawns with more drought-proof landscaping, and installing efficient washers, dishwashers and other fixtures.

But even more water can be conserved, the Pacific Institute found in a recent report. California recycles 23% of its municipal wastewater. The report found the state's urban areas could cut consumption by another 30% to 48% by conserving more.

Gleick, one of the authors, pointed out that water use trends in California over the past few decades show that population growth no longer means additional water is needed to support more people.

“We’re past the point where we can find a place to build another dam that makes sense or another river to tap,” Gleick said. “We’re now in a new era of efficiency and reuse.”

WHAT ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Even as Western cities diversify supplies, consume less and reuse more, scientists say climate change will be disruptive and could force cities to adopt more expensive technologies, like desalination, and mandate water cuts more often.

“There’s an assumption baked into almost all of these drought mitigation strategies and plans and water allocations that in the long run, drought is temporary,” said Swain of UCLA. “Increasingly, it’s an assumption that is wrong.”

Swain added that conservation is easier in its earlier stages.

“The first conservation gains are always the easiest,” he said. “You fix leaks, put in (efficient) toilets and fixtures and things like that in urban areas. After a certain

point, you then have to start going for the higher hanging fruit.”

Last month, the Southern Nevada Water Authority announced that water levels at Lake Mead had fallen so low that Las Vegas is drawing water from deeper in the reservoir, from the so-called “third straw.”

The pipeline near the bottom of the lake was completed in 2015 and built so that Las Vegas can still get water if the lake’s surface drops below two other intake pipes.

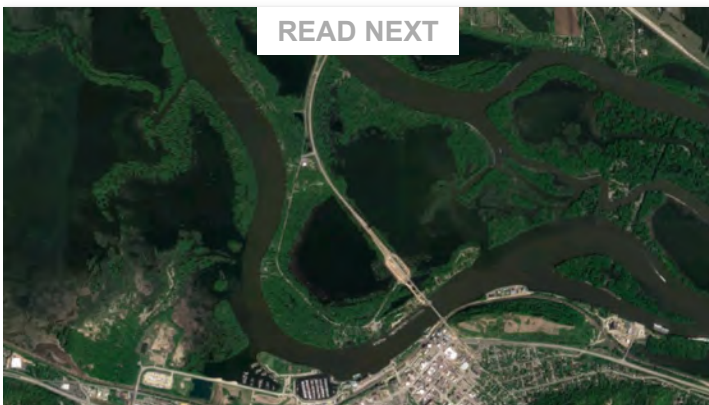
“What we have now is a new reality of reduced flows in the whole Colorado River system,” said Castle of the Getches-Wilkinson Center. “That’s going to require the per capita usage in these various cities to continue to go down, and not just when the governor declares an emergency.”

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The Associated Press receives support from the Walton Family Foundation for coverage of water and environmental policy. The AP is solely responsible for all content. For all of AP’s environmental coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/environment>

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This story was first published on May 24, 2022. It was updated on May 25, 2022 to correct a mistaken reference to San Diego. The correct entity is the San Diego County Water Authority.



TRENDING STORIES

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JUNE 05, 2022 2:26 PM

Police searching for suspect after shooting at NC hospital

UPDATED JUNE 06, 2022 7:05 AM

Disaster upon disaster: Wildfires are contaminating the West's depleting water with ashy sludge

By [Ella Nilsen](#), CNN

🕒 Updated 3:00 AM ET, Sun May 29, 2022



Mudslides flowed into rivers after the King Fire in Placer County, California.

(CNN) — Officials in Las Vegas, New Mexico, had barely finished battling the massive [Calf Canyon-Hermits Peak wildfire](#) earlier this month before they had to point their defenses toward another threat: the ash-filled erosion that could pollute their water.

The fire-scarred land along the banks of the Gallinas River is on the forefront of Mayor Louie Trujillo's mind these days. As much as the parched West needs rain, Trujillo and other officials are racing the weather to divert [precious river water](#) into a downstream lake before downpour comes and [washes the burnt topsoil and ash](#) into the river.

"There are large portions of the watershed you can see that are completely burned. It looks like burnt toothpicks sticking out of the ground for acres and acres," Trujillo told CNN. "With the soil instability, during a heavy rain event it would be like putting water on a bunch of baby powder where it doesn't absorb at all; it just falls. We hope to beat the monsoon season, doing some of the interventions we're going to have to do along the watershed."

Megafires aren't just [burning down homes, trees and wildlife](#) in the West. They're also destabilizing the soil. When it rains, thousands of tons of charred sediment flow into rivers and reservoirs used for drinking water. The Gallinas River, for example, supplies about 90 percent of the water for Las Vegas.

"It's literally like tasting dirt," said Andy Fecko, general manager at the Placer County Water Agency in Auburn, California, a city that sits between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe.

"It adds a tremendous amount of treatment costs," Fecko told CNN. "You're trying to filter out water that's 10 to 20 times dirtier."

Even if they can filter out the taste of dirt and ash, water treatment managers also worry about the lingering impacts of charred organic compounds mixing with the chlorine used to purify the water so it's drinkable. The Environmental Protection Agency has warned about the [health impacts of mixing the two](#).

The confluence of the Middle and North Forks of the American River in Placer County. The Middle Fork, bottom, carried the ash and burned soil from the King Fire and merged with the clean North Fork.

All of this is adding more stress to water resources that are already depleting in the West's megadrought. Conservationists and officials are sounding the alarm about yet another impact of a warming climate, massive wildfires and fragile water resources.

"This is not our first megadrought, so we have to make really good use of every drop of water that we store," said Dan Porter, forest program director for the Nature Conservancy. "These megafires are making that very difficult to do."



In September 2014, [California's King Fire](#) ripped through over 100,000 acres in El Dorado County. That fire was relatively small by the standards of other megafires, but it burned very hot.

It was "a blast furnace of an event that obliterated everything in its path," Fecko told CNN. "It was nuclear winter up there after that event."

The fire was just the first problem. The following rainy season, more than 300,000 tons of ashy, topsoil sludge ended up in the Rubicon River -- normally pristine water that flows out of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

The huge sediment dump caused headaches for Fecko's water agency on two fronts, he said. First was the impact to their hydroelectric power operations, which clogged up with dirt that made it tough to run the water through to generate electricity. The second was drinking water.

"You simply cannot filter out the taste and odor," Fecko said, likening the taste and smell to the earthy smell after it rains. And he said the added sediment doubled the cost of water treatment at his facility, necessitating water filters to be changed out more often.

It can take years for that taste and smell to go away. That period only gets longer in the middle of a megadrought.

Related Article: Wildfires are getting more extreme and burning more land. The UN says it's time to 'learn to live with fire'

"It's essentially these micro-organics you can't filter out, it's so small," Fecko said.

Frog eggs covered in sediment after a wildfire in California.

And while humans have water filtration, wildlife does not. Researchers at the University of California, Davis captured photos of frog eggs after the sediment dump; they were covered by fine, ashy dirt, which blocks the eggs from getting oxygen.

"They rely on clean, well-oxygenated water," Porter said. "When the wildfire chocks the stream full of mud, the oxygen-holding capacity of the water is reduced. It clogs gills; it clogs egg sacs."

With an [8-year restoration project](#) conducted by Fecko's water agency, the US Forest Service, the Nature Conservancy and other partners still ongoing, conservationists are hopeful the frog population has recovered. But even with close to a decade restoring the landscape, sediment still shows up in hydropower bays, Fecko said.

A potential carcinogen

Those micro-organic compounds that give water a funny taste and smell after fire-caused erosion are worrying for another reason.

When organic compounds from the ash interact with the chlorine used to treat water, it can form byproducts that can act as carcinogens -- things that can cause cancer -- with long-term exposure. It's another aspect of this problem that scientists and water quality managers are studying.

"It's tasteless, you can't see it, but what the EPA has identified is long-term exposure to these disinfection byproducts, chronic exposure can actually be a carcinogen," said Dan Corcoran, director of operations at the El Dorado Irrigation District in Placerville, California. "It's a nationwide issue and it's an evolving science."

Corcoran's water district had to deal with this problem after last year's massive [Caldor Fire torched the landscape in August](#). In October, the area was hit with an atmospheric river rain event that caused massive flooding and erosion.

"We went from drought to flood management literally overnight," Corcoran said, describing a "wall of water"

blackened by ash and filled with dead trees and debris flowing through the watershed.^A

Restoration projects in fire-scarred areas are ongoing and include prescribed burns and thinning to ensure the next fire isn't so catastrophic and doesn't pose as much of a challenge to rivers and reservoirs.

But there's also an education campaign for policymakers and residents about the threat wildfires pose to their drinking water.

"Seventy-one percent of the entire state of California drinks water that comes out of the Sierra Nevada," Corcoran said. "Three-quarters of the people who live in our state should be concerned with how our headwaters are managed."

And with climate change exacerbating drought conditions in California and causing snow-melt water to run down weeks ahead of schedule, water officials and conservationists are warning of even more unpredictability ahead.

"I don't think people really understand the severity of the threat to the overall system of water management across California and across the West," said Porter. "We're facing a climate-driven set of processes that we don't have full control



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The Camp Creek in El Dorado County, California, before the Caldor Fire.

Camp Creek after the fire in a rain storm.





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New pilot program looks to protect Mt. Rose watershed, as heavy recreational use increases

By [Freixys Casado](#)

Published: May. 30, 2022 at 10:39 PM PDT

RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - Starting this week, locals and visitors will see a new face around the Mt. Rose Fan/Upper Galena area.

Heavy recreational use of the trails is currently outpacing available forest service personnel.

“We’re seeing a lot of changes in the watershed due to fire and increased recreation,” said Stefanie Morris, water resources manager at TMWA.

To protect the Mt. Rose watershed from experiencing similar changes, the [Truckee Meadows Water Authority \(TMWA\)](#) and the [National Forest Foundation \(NFF\)](#) have partnered to launch the Forest Ambassador Program. As the name indicates, the program will provide the funding to add a forest ambassador who will conduct a range of recreation-management tasks, including public outreach, education, and trail stewardship.

“They will be boots on the ground, on the trails, talking to people about responsible recreation,” said Morris. “Picking up trash, pack it in, pack it out.”

Morris says recreational impacts such as people going off trails and/or leaving trash creates sediment and other materials bad for the water.

“That increases the water treatment cost so healthy watersheds are good for good, high-quality water,” said Morris.

TMWA’s involvement came with the recent completion of the Mt. Rose Water Treatment Plant, which relies on seasonal water flows from Whites Creek and is near heavy recreational-use areas (Thomas and Galena Creeks).

“Largely before, most of the water was coming from groundwater pumping so by adding this water treatment plant, it gives TMWA another water source to serve this area and to rest the groundwater basin and sustainably manage our resources,” Morris said.

Another threat to our watershed is wildfires. With data showing most of them are [caused by humans](#), the forest ambassador will also have the responsibility to educate everyone about forest fire threats.

“This ambassador will collect data about recreational uses and about their potential impacts and that will help the forest service see if they need additional resources,” said Morris.

TMWA is providing \$50,000 to fund the pilot program, which will last all summer. The ambassador will be on the ground, starting June 1st.

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TMWA Introduces New Forest Ambassador Program

- May 30, 2022 Updated May 30, 2022

The Truckee Meadows Water Authority has a new pilot program aimed at educating the public about forest fire threats.

As featured on

0:54



New forest ambassador program looks to protect Mt. Rose Watershed

TMWA will provide \$50,000 to the NFF to fund the Forest Ambassador Program for 2022 and will collaborate on the educational outreach program.

New pilot program looks to protect Mt. Rose watershed, as heavy recreational use increases



By [Freixys Casado](#)
Published: May. 30, 2022 at 10:39 PM PDT
[f](#) [✉](#) [t](#) [p](#) [in](#)

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Home > News > Government > **City increases wastewater treatment capacity in North**

GOVERNMENT

City increases wastewater treatment capacity in North Valleys for new development

By ThisIsReno | Published: June 1, 2022 | Last Updated on J

By Kelsey Penrose

The Reno City Council today approved the use of an additional 100,000 gallons per day of sewer capacity at the Reno Stead Water Reclamation Facility (RSWRF) following a presentation on Swan Lake capacity and usage.

The city was previously sued and [settled a multi-million dollar lawsuit](#) that alleged it had been negligent in the management of Swan Lake. This, according to residents, led to damages to homes & properties in the North Valleys after repeated flooding.

According to city staff, there is limited sewer capacity remaining at the RSWRF connected to a short term capacity project that diverts or “shaves” the raw sewage flow to a pipe used to pump sludge to Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility for processing.

While this project provides up to half a million gallons of sewer capacity, the council had only authorized a total of 125,000 gallons.

Sewer capacity was limited to allow the remaining flow potential to be used to reduce the volume of effluent going to Swan Lake, reducing the potential of flooding, according to city staff.



“When we’re in a drought, we’re not thinking about floods. When it’s flooding, we’re never thinking about drought. But in Nevada we’re always either in droughts or floods.”

In November 2020, council approved the use of an additional 50,000 gallons of flow shave capacity a total of 125,000 gallons of the 500,000 gallons of overall capacity.



Staff today requested an additional 100,000 gallons, bringing the total to 225,000, which was approved with a 6-1 vote with Councilmember Jenny Brekhus voting against the increase.

Brekhus said she was still not comfortable with approving additional flow capacity, and stated that the basin takes additional flows from unincorporated Washoe County, which is not tracked by those areas that are at flood risk.

She also said the city is in a “bad place” because there isn’t certainty for development.

“It’s a race. It’s hunger games to get your connections,” said Brekhus.

A presentation was held detailing mitigation effects to keep water levels lower at Swan Lake to prevent future flooding from occurring, including constructing a pump to bring irrigation to American Flat Farm from April to October.



According to staff, American Flat Farm pumped over 400 million gallons of water from Swan Lake during the irrigation season, equivalent to 1.1 million gallons per day or 1,200 acre feet of water.

However, as Councilmembers Brekhus and Naomi Duerr pointed out, the pumps would not be operating during the winter months when flooding is most likely to occur.

“This pumping does not give me confidence if we had an event which is very focused—like an atmospheric river—that this would save us,” said Brekhus.

Duerr added that while we might be in drought conditions currently, weather can change rapidly and the city needs to be prepared for these events.

“When we’re in a drought, we’re not thinking about floods,” said Duerr. “When it’s flooding, we’re never thinking about drought. But in Nevada we’re always either in droughts or floods.”



Swan Lake flooding in 2019. Image: Bob Cor
This Is Reno

Duerr also asked staff to provide updates on stormwater reservoir compliance checks. In a prior assessment it was found that 40% of the stormwater reservoirs were out of compliance, according to Duerr.

“It would give me more confidence because ...a portion of the problem at Swan Lake was due to overflowing or malfunctioning stormwater retention systems, and some percentage came from the sewage treatment plant,” said Duerr. “That’s one reason we did the flow shave.”

Flow shaving is not occurring because flows have not gone over the 2 million gallons per day amount.

The reason for requesting additional capacity, according to staff, is due to expansion as well as for future projects that have already been approved, such as Evans Ranch, Silver Star Ranch, Prado Ranch and others, which total 1.57 million gallons per day of new developments.

Prior to approval, there were only 5,000 gallons per day left to distribute, while 72,000 additional gallons per day capacity was needed.



The long-term solution for increasing wastewater treatment capacity, according to staff, is the expansion of RSWRF from 2 million to 4 million gallons per day; the Advanced Purified Water Facility and the American Flat Aquifer Storage and Recovery project.

City staff projects the Advanced Purified Water Facility project to be completed in about three years.

Council also approved an agreement with the Washoe County School District for provision of recycled water from the Reno Stead Water Reclamation Facility for landscape irrigation at O'Brien Middle School in an amount not to exceed \$336,000.

Other council items

Provided by the city and edited by This Is Reno.

Council approved the transfer of \$5,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFR) to the Reno Bike Project to replace lost revenue due to COVID-19, and to allow the Bike Project to provide bike services to underserved children and adults within the community.



Bikes at the Reno Bike Project. Image: Ty O'Neil / This Is Reno

The item was brought to the council by Councilmember (C) Delgado. The Reno Bike Project is a nonprofit which provides bike resources to community members.

In Aug. 2021, council approved the use of SLFR funds to support items identified in Phase 1 of the implementation plan.

Funds must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024 and spent no later than Dec. 31, 2026. The City of Reno is [seeking proposals](#) from the community to help identify areas of need and identify

that will help stop the spread of COVID-19, and continue to support the city and its residents on the path to recovery.

Council also approved the following citizen appointments:



- Trish Greif (reappointment) and Sonya Lucatero (reappointment) to the Urban Forestry Commission.
- Emmanuel Gutierrez, Maricela Gutierrez-Rodriguez, Jennifer Hildebrand, and Janna Moyer to Ward 3 Neighborhood Advisory Board.
- Lilith Baran to the Reno Arts and Culture Commission.
- Council appointed Hillary Schieve to the Regional Transportation Commission.

Council approved an Energy Performance Contract with Ameresco Inc. not to exceed million for the new police station and public safety center.

The public safety center project will include:

- 401kW rooftop solar array
- 250kW battery module
- Roof replacement
- A lighting retrofit of 27 parks around the city

Implementation of this project will result in projected savings of 221,274 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electric energy, according to staff, and generate 776,486 kWh of electricity from solar energy annua



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A distribution center under construction in North Las Vegas on March 29, 2017. (Jeff Scheid/The Nevada Independent)

Indy Environment: Labor regulators move to address extreme heat as researchers see increasing risk

Good morning, and welcome to the Indy Environment newsletter.

As always, we want to hear from readers. Let us know what you're seeing on the ground and how policies are affecting you. Email me with any tips at daniel@thenvindy.com.

If you received this from a friend, [sign-up here](#) to receive it in your inbox.

By Daniel Rothberg and Naoka Foreman

Extreme heat poses extreme risks, especially for outdoor workers.

By combing through years of data, researchers are beginning to understand how these manifest and which workers are most at risk from heat-related stress or illness. At the same time, federal and state labor regulators are working to address the issue with triple-digit heat in [the forecast](#).

days.

In most states and federally, there are no specific standards that address heat exposure on the job. **But for the first time this year, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is putting emphasis on protecting workers from heat-related illness.**

Earlier this year, OSHA announced a nationwide program that gives regulators the authority to inspect workplaces where there could be hazardous conditions. In other words, as OSHA [laid out in a fact sheet](#), the program “means that OSHA can now launch heat-related inspections on high-risk worksites before workers suffer preventable injuries, illnesses, or fatalities.”

The program also aims to encourage proactive measures, such as making sure workers have access to shade or plans to help new employees acclimate to working outside on hot days.

Nevada, which runs its own federal-approved OSHA program, is adopting a similar heat emphasis program effective June 15. On priority days — where temperatures hit at least 90 degrees Fahrenheit — [Nevada OSHA plans to](#) conduct site inspections for high-risk industries, investigate heat-related complaints and help businesses take proactive steps to protect workers.

“This is really basically saying that there’s going to be some proactive enforcement,” Victoria Carreon, who directs the state’s Division of Industrial Relations, said in an interview last week.

Although the federal program identifies 80 degrees as the benchmark temperature to trigger a priority day, the state program adopted a 90 degree standard, given Nevada’s lack of humidity.

Heat remains an emerging issue that state and federal regulators are working to tackle.

Across the Southwest, meteorologists have continued to record temperature increases that [scientists have attributed](#) to human-caused climate change. In cities like Las Vegas and Reno, development and the use of energy-absorbing materials, such as asphalt, have amplified the warming trend, a phenomenon known as the [urban heat-island effect](#).

Last year, Nevada OSHA reported two heat-related fatalities. **Officials have also documented an average of 133 heat stress complaints between 2016 and 2021, a rate of more than one complaint for every three days in the calendar year.** In 2021 alone, Nevada OSHA fielded 202 heat stress complaints, the majority of which (159 complaints) were in Southern Nevada.

[In a paper last month](#), experts from the Desert Research Institute, Guinn Center and Nevada State College found that as temperatures have risen, so too have work-related heat illness in three Southwest cities — Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Phoenix — between 2011 and 2018. The study also analyzed the demographic profiles of workers who faced heat stress or heat illness.

The study supports other research that has found that heat can have disproportionate impacts across the population. Heat does not affect everyone the same, and it’s true at the workplace.

Erick Bandala, an assistant research professor at the Desert Research Institute and the paper’s lead author, said Hispanic and Latino workers by far make up “the ethnicity with the highest number of people being affected, even though they represent a minority of the population.”

study found that workers with more experience were often the ones who faced heat illness, something that surprised Bandala, who said this might have to do with how they perceive risk over time.

"We all are aware that tornados or hurricanes or thunderstorms or flooding are things you need to be concerned about," he said. "When the warning comes, you may be at risk. But when you hear about a heat wave coming, how many of us really believe we are or may be at risk?"

Even as it becomes an increasingly pressing issue with continued warming, studying the effects of extreme heat on workers can be challenging. Bandala said there is a need for more uniform data collection. It is also likely that workplace heat stress is often underreported.

Nancy Brune, a co-author of the paper and a senior fellow at the Guinn Center, a nonpartisan public policy think tank, said in a press release that the study is another data point that should spur regulators to take action. "This study underscores the importance of and the need for the work the Nevada [OSHA] is doing to adopt a regulation to address heat illness," [Brune said](#).

Despite the new nationwide heat emphasis program, **labor officials are still limited in their ability to regulate heat at work.** The heat emphasis program was crafted under what is known as the "[general duty clause](#)," a labor standard requiring employers to maintain a workplace "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."

Several states, including California, Minnesota, Oregon and Washington, have adopted specific rules aimed at preventing heat illness in the workplace. **Nevada remains in the process of adopting its own heat illness regulation, as does the [federal Department of Labor](#).**

The effort to craft a Nevada-specific heat standard began in 2020, and [the proposed regulation](#) has been revised several times with comments from businesses. Having a specific rule in place, Carreon argued, remains important because it will provide more clarity for businesses seeking to provide a safe workplace and regulators charged with enforcement. For the rule to go into effect, it must be approved by the [Legislative Commission](#), a panel of a dozen state lawmakers.

Because of Nevada's climate and temperature increases expected in the coming years, Carreon said extreme heat is at the forefront of the issues that Nevada OSHA is working on addressing.

"It's definitely on the top of our priority list," she said.

Here's what else I'm watching this week:



Solar panels at the Techren Solar Project near Boulder City on Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2019. (Daniel Clark/The Nevada Independent)

During a press conference in Las Vegas on Tuesday, U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland [announced](#) lower fees and improvements in processing permits for renewable projects on public land. Our reporter, Naoka Foreman, covered the event and has this report:

Haaland says her agency, charged with managing federal public land, will reduce rents and fees for wind and solar projects. The agency also plans to create renewable energy coordination offices to help speed up processing applications for wind, solar and geothermal projects.

Haaland held the press conference inside an NV Energy office in Las Vegas on Tuesday to announce the two steps the White House is taking to address climate change. Rep. Steven Horsford (D-NV) and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) were also in attendance.

“There is an urgent need to make bold investments as we seek to decarbonize the economy and protect our communities,” Haaland said.

The five new renewable energy coordination offices will be created within the federal Bureau of Land Management, which manages about 67 percent of the land in Nevada.

Haaland said federal officials are coordinating with local and state elected officials, Native American tribes and conservation groups to modernize America’s power infrastructure.

“The technological advances, increased interest, cost-effectiveness and tremendous economic potential make these projects a promising path for diversifying our energy portfolio while at the same time combating climate change and investing in our local communities,” she said.

Haaland also lauded Nevada as a leader in renewable energy development nationally. At the event, Cortez Masto said she introduced legislation, which passed in 2020, to extend a range of tax incentives for solar, wind and geothermal energy development and other renewable energy technologies that would create new jobs, lower costs for consumers and help reduce emissions.

Nevada.

“This is about lowering costs for families as well,” Cortez Masto said. “The focus here is ensuring that not only are we energy independent, we are protecting the future for our kids, our families — around clean energy — but we’re lowering costs for families as well.”

— Naoka Foreman



An irrigation ditch in the Walker River Basin. (David Calvert/The Nevada Independent)

All things Nevada water: Several key water officials and water districts across the state, from the Southern Nevada Water Authority to the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, presented to the Interim Subcommittee on Public Lands last week. [Here’s a recording of the meeting](#). For those who follow Nevada water closely, the presentations were fascinating and highlight major issues, **especially around efforts to manage surface water and groundwater as a connected resource.**

Where do Western cities get their water? And why do they still have it in a drought? *The Associated Press*’ Suman Naishadham [published an excellent explainer](#) on where several major Southwest cities, including Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Diego, get their water.

- Water in the Colorado River is being transferred from upstream reservoirs to keep Lake Powell from dropping below critical levels. **But a certain portion of water could be lost along the way.** *The Colorado Sun*’s Chris Outcalt [looked at how water managers are tracking the transfer](#) of water as it makes its way to Lake Powell — and how some water is lost to evaporation or other natural processes, such as water seeping into the ground.
- The drought is causing officials to look at the grid in a different light, [E&E News’ Jason Plautz reports](#). “Utilities and grid operators say they have this summer’s energy needs covered, despite the low snowpack. **But the drought has forced**

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plants, and the heat impact on the grid.”

The *Las Vegas Sun*’s Jessica Hill [reports on](#) the **Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe’s efforts to protect its water, culture and ancestral homelands** in an area of Nevada where federal public land is increasingly being looked at for military training and geothermal development.

Nearly one year after the devastating Dixie Fire tore through Northern California, one town is looking toward the future. *The Los Angeles Times*’ Alex Wigglesworth [reports on a coalition](#) that is working to rebuild a community in Greenville, California, a town devastated by last year’s Dixie Fire. The devastating blaze burned nearly 1 million acres northwest of Reno.

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NEWS

Lessons learned: Nevada Cares Campus homeless shelter sees 3,500 people in first year


Mark Robison

Reno Gazette Journal

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Update at 10 a.m. June 1, 2022 for minor clarifications.

It's been a bumpy road for Washoe County's main homeless shelter since it opened a year ago and tripled the number of beds for those in need.

The new shelter — called the Nevada Cares Campus — has found itself at the center of scrutiny thanks, in part, to a ceiling collapse, rampant mold and safety concerns.

Despite the problems in its first year, the Cares campus shelter has served 3,463 unique clients and provided 194,917 bed nights, according to statistics provided by the county.

Over this time, many lessons have been learned. Those involved with shelter operations look forward to the next 12 months as new staff starts, new security measures come online, and construction begins on sturdier facilities with layouts better designed for clients' needs.

How and why a new shelter got built

The Nevada Cares Campus was put up quickly in early 2021 — a mere 85 days — to become the main emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness. It features 604 beds for men and women.

It replaced the shelter buildings on Record Street in downtown Reno. Those had 208 beds for men and women.

The larger campus is about a mile away from the old one and is just off Fourth Street on the edge of the Spaghetti Bowl.

“It was during the pandemic when all of these individuals were at the (Reno) Event Center or in large tents,” said Dana Searcy, Washoe County’s point person for the Cares campus.

“The need was urgent to find a place to put people safely because we couldn't put them back (in the Record Street shelter) because there wasn't enough space to allow for social distancing.”

An opportunity came up to purchase land near the Spaghetti Bowl, and local governments were flush with funding tied to COVID-19. This also was a chance to move concentrations of unhoused people away from downtown’s tourist mecca.

“They purchased the best facilities that we could get at the time,” Searcy said.

That meant Sprung buildings and recycled storage containers for bathrooms and showers. Sprung buildings are high-tension fabric structures that are often used by the military because of their speed of assembly and relatively low cost.

“The idea was we really want to develop this 15-acre campus where we have all these good intentions and plans on housing and programming,” Searcy said. “But the primary need for right at that moment was a good safe place to socially distance individuals and make sure that it added enough capacity so we're never going to run into this problem again where we couldn't socially distance the people who needed help.”

The thinking was that the Cares campus population would slowly increase, giving time to hire staff and grow into this new regional effort of having homeless sheltering handled at the county level instead of largely by the cities of Reno and Sparks.

That slow ramp-up didn't happen.

In less than a month after opening, the Cares campus basically hit its capacity of 604 beds and has rarely fallen much below.

“It was not intended to get there,” said Searcy about reaching capacity so soon. “The need grew a lot faster than we anticipated.”

Those arriving at the new shelter were not disciplined soldiers but instead were people facing some of life's hardest circumstances, with mental illness and drug addiction not uncommon. They put a heavy strain on the new shelter, leading to structural failings sooner than expected.

Starting in early June, the county is embarking on a 10-month construction project to basically replace the shelter's original incarnation.

The board of county commissioners recently approved a bigger Cares campus budget, up from \$38 million for a similar proposal made a year ago to just over \$70 million.

Explanations for the increase cite — among other reasons — buying more durable materials to decrease future maintenance costs, expanding the footprint of many buildings, increasing office space so more support staff can work on site, and adding fencing and gates.

The good news, as Searcy sees it, is that the sprawling campus has the flexibility to respond to the evolving needs for better services.

New safety measures

One small but significant change that's expected in the next two weeks is deployment of a new metal detector and bag detector.

“They're excited about this,” Searcy said about Cares residents. “Everybody wants to feel safer and more secure.”

Even so, some complain about the personal intrusion of such searches.

“Those are the same ones who complain about it being an unsafe environment,” said Grant Denton, who runs the nonprofit Karma Box.

Karma Box operates Safe Camp, which is a part of the Cares campus, offers 45 more beds, and is aimed at people actively seeking permanent housing.

"Having a knife with you on the streets is probably a good idea," Denton said, "but it's also not safe to have a facility where everybody's got weapons. You're going to have to sacrifice something."

Lesson learned: More staff needed

From the beginning, the Cares campus hasn't been fully staffed. In fact, it mostly hasn't even been close to ideal levels.

Cleaning, feeding and resolving conflicts for hundreds of down-on-their-luck people is labor intensive in the best of times.

With the shelter having come online during a pandemic and record low unemployment, it was a perfect storm for a staffing disaster.

"I think a lesson we learned is about staffing — how many staff we have per client," Denton said. "We're learning it takes a lot more work on our end to help people to modify whatever behavior got them here."

Alexis Hill sees the local Our Place shelter for women and families as an example for how to handle staffing at the Cares campus. She is a county commissioner and chair of the Community Homeless Advisory Board.

"What we did at Our Place is we staffed up with case workers, mental health clinicians and nurses so there's a support team on site to help with internal conflicts, to get folks through the housing journey, and also to help people with the bumps and bruises just from living life," Hill said. "That was a very successful model for the county."

Washoe County recently entered into a \$6.5 million contract with Volunteers of America to handle day-to-day operations at Cares campus — to be the on-the-ground presence cleaning, feeding and keeping the peace. Part of that contract includes minimum wages in the \$17 to \$19 range in order to be more competitive in the tight local job market.

On top of that, the county committed additional funding to hire case workers, mental health clinicians and nurses.

"We're working right now to get medical support on campus through a nurse or an EMT to reduce calls for emergency service response," Searcy said.

Also, many caseworkers have been moved from working for VOA to working for the county because the VOA contract must be renewed every year, meaning staff are often uncertain if their job will continue.

"In a very competitive job environment, that's a hard thing to manage," Hill said. "It's a much better model now that we've committed the resources to getting caseworkers on the county side."

The county is also adding behavioral health staff at the Cares campus, which it hasn't had before.

"We're hoping to get that team on site in the next couple of weeks," Searcy said.

Mental health counselors are harder to find.

Searcy said, "We've got one hired but that's meant to be a team of six."

Lesson learned: Let the showers dry out

Another lesson learned involves shower mold, which Searcy shared a photo of publicly back in December.

The mold – generally not an issue in our high desert climate – got out of control because the showers were running 24 hours a day.

"Now they're trying to shut them down overnight so they can dry out," Searcy said, although even that's a difficult task.

There are people sleeping on the shelter's 604 beds who frequently use the restrooms, showers and laundry, plus 45 people at the adjacent Safe Camp and 60 to 70 more who stop by each day for such day-use services.

As a side note, earlier this year, Safe Camp ditched tents that were no match for Northern Nevada weather – and either cooked or froze those sleeping inside – in favor of temporary individual climate-controlled cube shelters with locking doors called ModPods. This was another lesson learned.

If the mold weren't problem enough, doors have been falling off their hinges because they weren't designed to be opened beyond 90 degrees.

The bathrooms, showers and laundry facilities are being rebuilt from scratch with more durable materials and finishes.

"That costs a lot more money but we're seeing the maintenance (costs) and we're seeing the mold and we're seeing all of these things that make it not a good place to be," Searcy said. "So we're addressing that through construction."

While the new facilities are being built, the county is renting a women's shower to replace one where a ceiling collapsed.

Challenge: Available housing

The lack of available housing has not made things easier.

"The challenge we have is that we get people a (rent) voucher and they're ready to be housed but there's no housing available," Denton said.

Hill echoed his words.

"It doesn't matter how many Section 8 vouchers you have, if you don't have anywhere for people to use those, then you can't get them out of shelters," she said, referring to support offered by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Hill said the county is working on using federal American Rescue Plan Act funds for permanent supportive housing.

Based on statistics recently presented to the homeless advisory board, 45 percent of individuals staying at Cares campus in February were 55 or older and 43 percent reported having a disability.

“Many of them are not going to work yet still need a dignified way to live,” Hill said. “They haven't been able to earn enough in their lifetime because of disability or mental illness to save up and retire and so getting them wraparound services and nursing care, that's what we're working on.”

There are also working people in the shelters who simply can't afford rent in the greater Reno area's skyrocketing housing market. This is another important aspect of the affordable housing challenge.

“We need to figure out how we can work with the cities — and at the county level — on workforce housing policies that are way overdue to incentivize developers to help us get people into permanent housing,” Hill said.

Conclusion: It's not just about shelter

Washoe County's homeless-services goal thus far has been about providing shelter for people in need.

Hill, Denton and Searcy all envision moving beyond that simple mission to helping people with more long-term solutions.

“We've put people in a shelter, we've gotten them fed, but we haven't thought, ‘OK, how do we how do we get them housing? How do we help them with the rest of their lives and to be a part of our community?’” Hill said.

Part of that, for Denton, involves setting people up better to find and keep a home. That's because skills that can help on the streets — such as being quick to show loud

aggression — are not the same ones that make you a good apartment neighbor.

“The whole goal is that we don't just put them in a house and then we see them on the street in three months,” he said. “There's got to be a process where we're learning the soft skills necessary to sustain living in more traditional housing.”

Searcy never saw the original incarnation of the Cares campus as being its final version, and she's excited for new facilities and new designs that will:

Aggregate people by their needs rather than putting all residents together in one big room. Offer cubicles to give people more privacy and reward them for engaging in case management and services.

And bring medical and mental health services to be located permanently at the shelter, as well as onsite case workers to shepherd people through the complex bureaucracy of finding housing and other assistance.

“From the time that building was built, there were presentations and conversations with community partners about what does this campus need to be, what services need to be here, and what types of buildings need to be here,” Searcy said.

She envisions a place where the DMV can come to issue IDs to people who don't have them in order to apply for various benefits or housing, a place for community court to be held, and a place for Northern Nevada HOPES to provide medical care.

"We want a place where anybody can come who's about to become homeless or who comes out of jail or a hospital and has nowhere to go," she said.

"It is a multi-functioning, flexible campus for our community. That has always been the goal. And while we have learned a lot — nobody's denying that — I think that it takes time to build that vision. That's why if asked about where we're at, I'd say we're continuing the journey.”

Mark Robison covers local government for the Reno Gazette-Journal, as well as writes Fact Checker and Ask the RGJ articles. His position is supported by donations and grants. Because of this, all of the journalism he publishes will be made available for free without concern for commercial return. If you'd like to see more articles like this, please consider sharing this article or donating at [RGJ.com/donate](https://www.rgj.com/donate). All donations go 100% to Mark's wages.

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California lawmakers mull buying out farmers to save water



Photo by: Rich Pedroncelli/AP

By: Adam Beatty, Associated Press

Posted at 10:00 AM, Jun 06, 2022 and last updated 10:00 AM, Jun 06, 2022

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — After decades of fighting farmers in court over how much water they can take out of California's rivers and streams, some state lawmakers want to try something different: use taxpayer money to buy out farmers.

A proposal in the state Senate would spend up to \$1.5 billion to buy “senior water rights” that allow farmers to take as much water as needed from the state's rivers and streams to grow their crops. If state officials owned those rights, they could leave the water in the rivers to benefit endangered species of salmon and other fish.

California has been mired in drought for most of the last two decades, prompting intense scrutiny of the state’s complex water system and how it might be modified to ensure steady supplies during exceptionally dry periods — including a separate state proposal that would pay farmers to grow fewer crops to save water.

Current readings show about 98% of the state has severe drought conditions as California heads into summer months that rarely produce any significant precipitation. Many areas have begun restricting water use for homeowners, largely by reducing outdoor use such as lawn irrigation. And farmers have had their allocation from the two major state-owned water systems reduced — in some cases down to zero.

Legally, all of the water in California is the property of the government. But farmers have “water rights” that let them take water for agriculture. Farmers have used those rights — governed by a complicated system based on seniority and other factors — to turn California's Central Valley into an agricultural powerhouse that provides much of the nation's fruits, nuts and vegetables.

home to endangered salmon and other fish. Environmental groups and farmers have battled for years over state and federal rules governing just how much water can be diverted for agriculture, which uses far more water than any other sector of the economy.

Now, with California having a record budget surplus of nearly \$100 billion, Democrats in the state Senate have proposed using up to \$1.5 billion to buy senior water rights — by either buying the land associated with the rights, buying just the right itself, or putting an easement on the land that requires the water to be used for fish and other fauna and flora.

The proposal is part of budget negotiations between lawmakers and Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration that should wrap up by the end of this month.

“It's like we're taking a page from corporate America and we're buying back stock,” said state Sen. Bob Wieckowski, a Democrat who represents the San Francisco Bay Area and is chair of a budget subcommittee overseeing environmental spending.

While \$1.5 billion sounds like a lot of money, it wouldn't buy that much water. Regulators measure water by “acre foot,” defined as enough water to cover 1 acre (0.4 hectares) of land to a depth of 1 foot (30 centimeters). That's the equivalent of 325,851 gallons (1.2 million liters).

A typical household uses 1 acre foot of water each year. Farmers collectively use up to 35 million acre feet of water each year, according to the Water Education Foundation.

The \$1.5 billion would be enough to buy about 200,000 acre feet of water, based on an average price of \$7,500 per acre foot, according to Tom

Still, Birmingham says the idea “makes an awful lot of sense” because “it is a means by which conflict can be avoided.”

Right now, the only way to get more water flowing in rivers and streams is to get state and federal regulators to change the rules. They can do that by requiring more water be left in rivers and streams, but that means less water for farmers. Those rule changes often prompt lawsuits, which can take a decade or longer to resolve, said Lester Snow, a former secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency and regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

“We need a way to take much quicker action. And I think acquiring water rights for that purpose is one of the ways to do that,” he said. “With climate change, we just don't have that kind of time.”

For this to work, farmers would have to voluntarily sell their valuable water rights — something Birmingham says shouldn't be a problem. Lots of farmers try to sell their water rights to Westlands Water District every year, Birmingham said.

“For many farmers ... their children simply are not interested in continuing to farm,” Birmingham said.

But state Sen. Brian Dahle, a Republican running for governor whose family has been farming in California for 92 years, said the only reason farmers would be willing to sell is because state officials are driving them out of business with burdensome regulations.

they have no other option.”

John McManus, executive director of the Golden State Salmon Association, said as with any legislative proposal “the devil will be in the details.” He said he'd want to see rules that make sure any additional water purchased by the state will remain in the rivers and not be removed by someone else with water rights farther downstream.

But he is hopeful the program will work because he said there are about six native fish species that are “on life support right now because we don't have enough water flowing through the Delta.”

“So anything that can be done to address that problem is appreciated,” he said.

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California Seeks To Rein In Water Usage By Closing A Nearly 2-Month Gap In Getting Data From Suppliers

June 7, 2022 at 11:11 am Filed Under: [California Drought](#), [Gavin Newsom](#), [water](#)

(CNN) — In response to [prolonged drought](#) across the West and ahead of the scorching summer months, California is asking its urban water suppliers to voluntarily report water consumption data sooner — so the state can better assess whether its water conservation goals are being met.

Years of low rainfall and snowpack coupled with more intense heat waves have fueled the state's historic, multiyear [drought conditions](#), rapidly draining its reservoirs.

READ MORE: [Justice Dept. Names 9, Including Former Sacramento Police Chief, To Aid In Review Of Uvalde Shooting](#)

Now California Gov. Gavin Newsom has responded by calling on local water agencies to submit [water usage data](#) by the third business day of every month — or sooner — in a bid to measure water conservation goals accurately and to foster greater transparency.

The California State Water Resources Control Board requests that water suppliers submit data outlining their monthly water production, the population served and the percentage of residential use earlier than usual.

As it stands, the state's suppliers have been required to share the data by the 28th of the following month. For instance, water-use data for the month of April were not submitted until the end of May and were not available to policymakers until June.

In a message to water suppliers, state water officials wrote, "access to current water consumption data is essential to state and local management of the drought emergency."

Last summer, Newsom pleaded with residents and businesses to voluntarily reduce their water consumption by 15%. But by the end

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of March, urban water usage was up by 19% compared to March 2020, the year the drought began.

It was the highest March water consumption since 2015, the State Water Resources Control Board reported.

In March, Newsom issued an executive order addressing the state's dire drought conditions. In response, the water board [banned](#) watering turf at commercial, industrial and institutional properties, excluding turf grass used for recreation or community purposes.

California's drought emergency now covers all 58 counties as the state is pushing into its third year of the megadrought. The board pointed to the worsening conditions, with the largest reservoirs in the state currently at half their historical averages.

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This year, the state faced the driest January, February and March since California started keeping records more than 100 years ago, the board noted.

Facing back-to-back dry years and record-breaking heat waves pushing the [drought into historic territory](#), California got a taste of the rain it was looking for in early fall last year, when the first big storm of the season pushed onshore in October.

Then, in late December, more than [17 feet of snow fell](#) in the Sierra Nevada, which researchers said was enough to break decades-old records.

But suddenly precipitation flatlined in January, and water content in the state's snowpack this year was [just 4% of normal](#) by the end of winter.

Because of this, the state's two largest reservoirs — Shasta Lake and Lake Oroville — were also at "[critically low levels](#)" in May, the point of the year when they should be the highest.

In Southern California, water district officials announced [unprecedented water restrictions](#), demanding businesses and residents in parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties to cut outdoor watering to one day a week, which began June 1.

And unlike cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, which overwhelmingly source water from the state's now dwindling reservoirs, much of [rural California](#) relies on groundwater that is already tapped out.



Syndrome Lives Out Dream Of Being A UPS Driver



Nightmare on the Christmas Street: Placer County Inmates Released While Jail Beds Sit Empty



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Not only has there not been enough precipitation to fill reservoirs, but the hot and thirsty air is also leeching water from what's left on the ground.

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Water scarcity should mean less planned growth

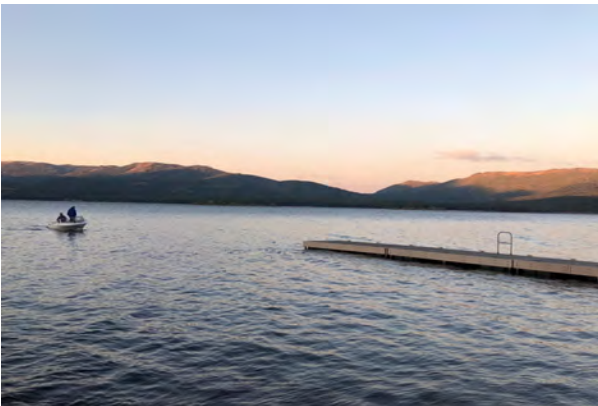


Bob Fulkerson

June 7th, 2022 at 2:00 AM

Opinion

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Stampede Reservoir near Truckee, California on Aug. 29, 2018. The federal Bureau of Reclamation, which manages the dam, predicts water users on the Truckee River could need to store as much water as four Stampede Reservoirs to prepare for the driest conditions predicted under climate change modeling. (Daniel Rothberg/The Nevada Independent).

“Water is not a constraint to growth,” according to EDAWN (Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada) Director Mike Kazmierski. But the hard truth is that the Sierra Nevada snowpack is in control of our regional water supply, not EDAWN. And, according to new research by the Lawrence Berkeley Lab, most of the Sierra Nevada snowpack will [likely be gone](#) by 2050 because of climate change and drought.

We are told by regional water managers that we have enough water rights to fuel growth in the Truckee Meadows and nearby valleys for the next 50 years. But when they refer to water rights as a basis for identifying sustainable water resources, these officials are either unaware of what they are talking about or are intentionally trying to mislead. A water right is a piece of paper that represents water. It does not provide any real water unless the water associated with the water right is actually available. A Truckee River water right means nothing if the Truckee River is dry.

The Comprehensive Regional Water Management Plan for Truckee Meadows and nearby valleys that was prepared and adopted by the Western Regional Water Commission for 2016–2035 speaks to the critical issue of identified, sustainable water resources for the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan. Chapter 2 of the water plan is entitled “Water Resources,” and Table 2–1 in chapter 2 in the [2016–2035 water plan](#) (entitled “Water Resource Baseline Table for Washoe County”) is critical to understanding how much identified, sustainable water may be available today and in the future.

The plan is being updated to a 2021–2040 time span, and the updated draft plan contains the same table. In both plans, the estimated amount of sustainable water resources is set at 217,978 acre–feet per year (af/y — an acre–foot is enough water to fill one acre of land to a depth of one foot). The problem with that number is that it includes reliance on water resources that are, at best, questionable.

Our region's water purveyor, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA), [wants to export water](#) from places like the Smoke Creek Desert, a magnificent desert oasis just north of Pyramid Lake. This would mimic the Honey Lake project that Vidler Water, now owned by D. R. Horton, the nation's largest homebuilder, spearheaded in the early 2000s. In a nutshell, TMWA's plan is to suck deserts dry. And they are not alone. The tech company Blockchains purchased considerable water rights near Pyramid Lake in the San Emidio and Hualapai basins that could also see their water exported to support regional growth. This is not sustainable. Groundwater in that desert, which is connected with Pyramid Lake, must remain in the desert.

The bottom line is that the 217,978 af/y number is far too high given that the water resources it relies on have not been shown to be sustainable. A more reasonable number for planning purposes would be, at best, 200,000 af/y available for the Truckee Meadows and adjacent valleys.

In 2008, Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency planners used 3.18 people per acre–foot to determine the population that could be served by a certain amount of water; if you multiply 3.18 times 200,000 af/y, you get 636,000 people. Yet in 2008, the [Truckee Meadows Regional Plan](#) estimated a feasible build–out population of 1.2 million people in the Truckee Meadows and adjacent valleys.

Some of the local elected officials responsible for that plan tried to hide its build–out population. A question ([WC-3](#)) was then placed on the November 2008 Washoe County ballot asking voters if they wanted the plan to be based on identified, sustainable water resources in Washoe County (i.e. 200,000 af/y). Yes, the voters said; the ballot question passed with 73 percent approval.

As a result, local elected officials were tasked by the voters with changing the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan to a maximum build–out population of approximately 600,000 people, not 1.2 million. But local elected officials refused to implement the standard set by the ballot question: They did nothing to change the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan's land use to accommodate 600,000 people.

It is reasonable to say that based on the water plan, the proposed updated water plan and our actual water resources, there are not enough identified, sustainable water resources to accommodate more

than a million people. In fact, given drought and climate change, we likely will not have enough identified, sustainable water resources for even 600,000 people. (We are getting somewhat close to the 600,000 number already; it is estimated there are approximately 485,000 people living in the Truckee Meadows and adjacent valleys at this time.)

The southwest U.S. is experiencing [the worst drought](#) in 1,200 years. Not since the time of the Anasazi has the region seen such dryness and associated devastation. And yet, our regional water purveyor, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, says no further conservation measures are necessary because saved water can't be used for new growth and development.

My eyes were first opened on that point when I was visiting with the late [Elmer Rusco](#) outside my house in old southwest Reno in the mid-1990s. He asked me about the water sprinkling the sidewalk and going into the gutter. I told him that I didn't have a water meter, because I didn't want to save water for the purpose of hydrating new subdivisions in the desert. He told me to think of the water I didn't use as staying in the Truckee River and going to Pyramid Lake. I changed my mind about water meters and water conservation right then and there.

Fast forward to the recent retirement of Jeff Kightlinger, one of the most respected water managers in the west, from his job directing the largest and most influential water authority in California for 15 years (the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California). In an [interview](#) with the *New York Times*, Kightlinger sounded the alarm about California crossing the "permanent threshold of crisis." He said recently announced strict water conservation measures for California will not be enough to avoid a water supply crisis.

Kightlinger's concerns are a 180 degree difference from Truckee Meadows Water Authority concerns. And some of the [same folks](#) who are telling us not to worry about our water supply are lobbying full force for the [Washoe County sprawl/lands bill](#), which will allow developers to convert wild and open spaces in places like the Pah Rah Range to suburban sprawl. Part of the bill, now before Congress, will also allow additional [tax-subsidized Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center-like entities](#), where billion-dollar corporations pay reduced rates or nothing in property or sales taxes. Instead, you and I will continue paying for the schools, roads, public safety and other infrastructure needed to support the businesses and population created by the [\\$2.1 billion in tax subsidies](#) to these and other corporations.

The forces driving unprecedented growth with no concern for water availability or taxpayer wallets include the largest homebuilders in the U.S. and real estate developers. They are represented by the state's most powerful law firms, who invest vast sums to elect state and local government officials and then lobby them in city hall and Carson City. The region's most juiced law firm, McDonald Carano, represents both the Truckee Meadows Water Authority and the area's biggest developers.

I shudder to ponder where all this is going. I weep and rage at the rapidly [diminishing natural beauty](#) of Truckee Meadows that I have seen in my 62 years. By the time my grandson graduates from high school, we're going to be surrounded by pavement and piles of sand.

The quaint idea of ordinary people influencing government decisions, and a stable democracy itself, seems like a distant memory. A stable climate that provides enough life-giving water for all is also a thing of the past. If your heart isn't broken by this, you better check your vital signs.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

I am grateful for the activists, reporters, planners, and elected representatives who have stepped up over the years to address critical water issues. Donate and/or volunteer, if you can, for groups and political candidates who have expressed concern for our quality of life, and who acknowledge we have a limited water supply — because we do.

Victory isn't guaranteed. But we surely lose if we do not try.

Bob Fulkerson is a fifth-generation Nevadan and lead national organizer for [Third Act](#).

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