

TMWA Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Press Clippings

January 11, 2011 – March 9, 2011



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Construction Begins at Prater Way and 19th Street on March 21

March 7, 2011
By [ThisIsReno](#)

SUBMITTED NEWS RELEASE

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) and Cambell Construction will begin work at the

intersection of Prater Way and 19th Street on Monday, March 14. The construction, which will last approximately three weeks, will not cause traffic detours for residents. However, traffic traveling east and west along Prater Way will be reduced to one lane for the duration of construction.

This construction project is a part of TMWA's Capital Improvement Program and will allow TMWA to deliver water more easily from the Glendale Water Treatment Plant to northeast Sparks and parts of Spanish Spring. Since 2001, TMWA has invested more than \$175 million in capital improvements in our water system to maintain and improve water quality and delivery to customers.

For more information about TMWA and your water, please visit www.tmwa.com.

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) is a not-for-profit water utility, overseen by elected officials from Reno, Sparks and Washoe County. TMWA employs a highly skilled team who ensure the treatment, delivery and availability of high-quality drinking water around the clock for more than 330,000 residents of the Truckee Meadows.

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Washoe launches project to increase Tahoe's clarity

By Jeff DeLong • jdelong@rgj.com • March 6, 2011

The tiniest particles of dirt that pose the most dire threat to Lake Tahoe's clarity are targeted in an emerging effort by Washoe County and other local jurisdictions around the lake.

Now in the early stages of a project designed to prevent particles the width of a human hair from flowing into the lake, Washoe County officials are confident they can make a difference.

The goal is to reduce the amount of the fine sediment flowing into the lake from urbanized areas in Incline Village and Crystal Bay by 34 percent over the next 15 years.

"I believe it is realistic however it is a work in progress," said Dan St. John, Washoe County's director of public works.

Washoe's efforts come in tandem with others under way in places like the city of South Lake Tahoe and Placer County to reduce the "total daily maximum load" of tiny particles carried into the lake by runoff.

A decade of research indicates these particles, combined with algae growth, play the largest role in clouding Tahoe's famously blue waters. Historically, one could see more than 100 feet into Tahoe's depths from the surface. Now, one can see only about 70 feet down.

If experts are successful with their 15-year goal, clarity could be enhanced by about 10 feet. Longer-term goals are to reduce fine particle pollution by 71 percent over 65 years, restoring historical clarity.

"This is the major culprit in the clarity loss of the lake," said Julie Regan, external affairs chief for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. TRPA was established by Congress more than 40 years ago to protect the lake.

Tahoe's problems are many, but the lake's clarity loss serves as a linchpin issue, Regan said.

"Lake Tahoe's clarity is certainly the signature indicator of the health of the entire ecosystem," Regan said.

Once the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approves a total maximum daily load plan for the Tahoe Basin -- an action St. John expects is still six to nine months away -- local jurisdictions will have two years to prepare strategies to meet pollution-reduction targets. Areas will then be monitored through a "pollution credit" system designed to track progress in cutting back pollution.

Physical changes pursued to reduce particle pollution in Washoe County will likely entail new systems of pipes, culverts and catchment basins and underground vaults designed to trap fine sediment.

"The concept is you try to capture the first flush," St. John said. "It's that first flush of runoff that has the highest pollution load."

Equally if not more important is emerging street sweeping technology that can pick up fine particles from streets before they are washed away. Washoe County recently purchased a \$200,000 "enhanced street sweeping" machine that captures particles in a closed system. The county plans on buying more, St. John said.

"We expect street sweeping to be a big part of our program," St. John said.

The effort will not come cheaply. St. John estimates it will cost Washoe County between \$250,000 to \$500,000 per year in administration, engineering and monitoring expenses -- not counting the cost of running equipment like the street sweepers. Formation of a storm water district charging fees to property owners in the area may be one way to raise

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needed money, he said.

Officials with the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection, which is working with Nevada local governments in preparing the pollution strategy, agree it could prove critical to Tahoe's long-term future.

"Obviously Lake Tahoe has nationally recognized environmental value," said NDEP spokesman Vinson Guthreau. "This sets the path for some sustainable clarity at Lake Tahoe."

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YOUR TURN

TMWA works hard to meet drinking water standards

Recently, an inaccurate story regarding the quality of drinking water in the Truckee Meadows surfaced again.

You may remember that back in December 2009 a report from the Environmental Working Group ranked the quality of our water as among the worst in the nation. Truckee Meadows Water Authority responded to that story, stating that the report was inaccurate and misleading. That is still the case today, and we are again in the position of defending our great water quality.

We thoroughly reviewed the data that EWG used over a year ago, when the initial report was issued. We found that much of its data on TMWA's water was inaccurate. An example of one major error is that EWG was rating drinking water, yet it used test data from untreated sources



MARK FOREE

(samples taken prior to treatment) and reported it as water delivered to our customers.

We immediately spoke with EWG regarding its numerous inaccuracies, and they assured us that they would correct the data. That was a year ago. Because EWG has since stopped all communication with TMWA, I sent a certified letter to it last August, pointed out all of the errors and again asked it to correct the data and modify its report. This inaccurate information is very upsetting, as no one takes our water quality more seriously than me and our entire staff at TMWA.

Just recently, the story was picked up by AOL Finance.com and local media, again stirring concern in our community. But, this time around, something else happened. We got e-mails and calls from customers and residents who are informed about our high-quality water. They volunteered to send out e-mails to groups they belonged to with

correct information. They expressed pride in their drinking water and dismay that anyone would rank it low. Even a class of fourth-graders at Bailey Charter Elementary School in Reno investigated the claims and quickly realized how false they were.

We are truly blessed in our community to have such an outstanding water source, most coming from Lake Tahoe via the Truckee River. Due to our excellent water source, and our superb team of water professionals and treatment plant operators, TMWA has always met all federal (EPA) and Nevada drinking water standards and has never violated a single water quality standard in the nearly 10 years of our existence.

This fact can be found on the Environmental Protection Agency's

website (EPA.gov) and by following the links on drinking water. To inform every customer, we send an annual water quality report that provides detailed information on the water that TMWA produces and delivers to you. This report, along with other water quality information, is also available on our website www.tmwa.com.

I would put our water quality up against any other city in the country, and I know it would rank very high! I would also put our superb team of water professionals and treatment plant operators up against any other utility.

If you ever have any questions about your water, you can contact our water quality staff at 775-834-8118.

Mark Foree is general manager of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

COMING UP

FRIDAY: Columnist Froma Harrop warns that the budget debate offers the perfect stage for mouthing "home truths" that are not quite true.

3/3/11 FGJ



Nevada bill seeks to tax bottled water

By The Associated Press • March 1, 2011

A bill introduced Tuesday would open the door in Nevada for taxes on bottled water and the jugs delivered to the office water cooler.

Democratic Assemblyman Tick Segerblom of Las Vegas is sponsoring AB218, which would exclude bottled water from the tax-exempt category of food. Current law allows taxes only on alcoholic beverages, tonics, vitamins, and prepared food intended for immediate consumption. It keeps taxes off food that provides nutritional value.

The bill defines bottled water as a sealed, calorie-free beverage without sweeteners, but the water may include carbonation, fruit or spice flavoring, vitamins, minerals and electrolytes.

AB218 was referred to the Assembly Committee on Taxation. If passed, it would take effect on July 1.

Co-sponsors are Las Vegas Democrats Assemblyman Paul Aizley, Assemblyman Steven Brooks and Assemblywoman Peggy Pierce.

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Las Vegas Sun

Nevada water authority pays people to remove lawns

The Associated Press

Saturday, Feb. 26, 2011 | 12:14 a.m.

There was a time when defiant Las Vegas residents and developers seemed determined to carpet over the entire desert with lush, green grass.

In 1999, the Southern Nevada Water Authority set out to change that attitude with a new program that paid people to rip out their lawns.

Since then, valley homes and businesses have removed enough turf to cover more than 2,600 regulation football fields and saved enough water to fill more than 63,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

And that's just one way of visualizing the latest milestone for the authority's Water Smart Landscapes program, a conservation effort unique among southwestern cities that recently surpassed 150 million square feet of grass converted to desert landscaping.

Authority Conservation Manager Doug Bennett likes to imagine it as a strip of sod 18 inches wide and long enough to wrap three quarters of the way around the globe.

"Another 50 million square feet and we'll circle the Earth," Bennett said.

The cash-for-grass program pays up to \$1.50 per square foot to qualifying businesses and residents who convert lawns to water-efficient landscapes.

With numerous conversion projects going on at once, it's hard to know for sure exactly when and where the milestone was reached. Bennett said the golf course at Spanish Trail Country Club is a pretty safe bet.

When told that the 150 million-square-foot mark might have been reached at his golf course, Spanish Trail General Manager Freddie Rohani chuckled and said, "Does that mean that for the next year we don't get a water bill?"

The private, 27-hole course in one of the valley's wealthiest neighborhoods has taken out more than 1 million square feet of turf through a series of large landscape conversions over the past five years.

Rohani said that when the course was built 25 years ago, "it was lush green and water wasn't a problem."

"Nobody would have dreamed of turf conversion," he said. "Time goes by, and we have to change accordingly."

Before the landscaping changes, the country club paid more than \$1 million a year for water, including summer bills that regularly topped \$160,000 a month.

Last year, the course's water bills totaled about \$925,000, a savings of roughly 10 percent, Rohani said.

Rather than rip out all its extra turf at once, the golf course is spreading its conversions out from year to

year to take full advantage of the rebate program, which caps payments to single properties at \$300,000 annually.

Rohani said he expects the country club will keep removing select areas of grass, as long as the water authority keeps offering rebates and the conversions do not negatively impact the playable area.

Bennett said it's fitting that the milestone was probably reached at Spanish Trail Country Club, since golf courses account for about 20 percent of all the turf that has been removed under the program so far.

It's also symbolic for another reason. "For an old Vegas, big money area like that to be making the change" shows the progress the authority has made in changing the community's attitude toward appropriate water use in the desert, Bennett said.

As water authority spokesman J.C. Davis put it, "Even the elite can pitch in for conservation."

Consider the most opulent address in Spanish Trail, if not all of Nevada.

At the southwest corner of the neighborhood is a 16-acre compound with a mansion and five smaller homes totaling 29 bedrooms, 41 bathrooms and almost 109,000 square feet.

Since it was built in 1997 for the brother of the Sultan of Brunei, the estate has consumed more water than any other residence in the valley, but a major landscape conversion helped the property cut its use by almost 4.5 million gallons from 2008 to 2009.

The average home in the Las Vegas Valley goes through about 163,000 gallons of water annually, with roughly 60 percent of that use occurring outside in the yard.

The turf-rebate program is credited with saving 41.4 billion gallons of water so far.

More than 43,300 separate landscape conversions have been completed under the program, including 39,955 at homes and 4,411 at commercial properties.

Conversions at businesses account for 98.9 million of the 150.9 million square feet of grass converted so far. The other 52.1 million square feet has come from residences.

The water authority has paid out more than \$167.8 million in turf rebates since 1999, \$101.5 million of it to commercial properties and \$66.3 million to homeowners.

And if money isn't enough to persuade people to participate, the authority has a Yard of the Month competition, recognizing the best looking and most functional local landscapes featuring water-efficient plants, trees and shrubs.

The prize amounts to bragging rights: a "Yard of the Month" sign the winners can put up in front of their homes.

Information from: Las Vegas Review-Journal, <http://www.lvrj.com>

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Sierra snowpack in good shape

By Jeff DeLong • jdelong@rgj.com • February 26, 2011

Friday's hefty snowstorm, which brought feet of fresh, powdery snow to the Sierra, will further build on a mountain snowpack vital to summer water supplies in the Reno-Sparks area.

The storm follows wintry weather last week, which brought bountiful snowfall, ending a lengthy dry period in January and early February that diminished a snowpack measured at twice normal levels the first of the year.

Early Friday morning -- before the numbers were boosted by heavy snow throughout the day -- the Lake Tahoe Basin's snowpack measured 138 percent of normal for the date. While far less than the 227 percent recorded Jan. 1 after a particularly snowy December, those numbers represented a substantial improvement from just a little earlier this month. On Feb. 14, Tahoe's snowpack was 120 percent of average, the Truckee River Basin's was 105 percent.

Friday's snowstorm will boost the numbers further, with another warmer storm expected to hit the region the middle of next week, also likely to deepen the snowpack, help fill reservoirs and charge the region's rivers and streams with runoff come spring.

It's all good, experts said.

"It's been a pretty good gain. This is huge," said Kevin Baker, acting meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service in Reno. "(Last week's storm) was big, and this is just icing on the cake."

Despite a bust in January, December and February snowfall should combine to produce a healthy snowpack, Baker said.

"We could probably skate through the rest of the year and still have a normal snowpack," he said.

mountain snowpack

Friday:
Truckee River Basin:
120 percent of average
Lake Tahoe Basin:
138 percent

Carson River Basin:
117 percent
Walker River Basin:
123 percent
Feb. 14
Truckee River Basin:
105 percent
Lake Tahoe Basin:
120 percent
Carson River Basin:
103 percent
Walker River Basin:
112 percent
Feb. 25, 2010
Truckee River Basin:
86 percent
Lake Tahoe Basin:
90 percent
Carson River Basin:
96 percent
Walker River Basin:
89 percent
Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service


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TCID looking toward future

FEBRUARY, 25 2011

BY STEVE PUTERSKI

LAHONTAN VALLEY NEWS

Rusty Jardine has a new vision for the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District.

Jardine, TCID's project manager, presented some of his new ideas to attendees at the 2011 Ag Expo at the Fallon Convention Center on Wednesday.

His list of ideas includes eliminating litigation coverage for water users, focusing on water delivery to users, expanding green energy options, looking at water treatment, upgrading existing facilities throughout the Truckee Canal and regionalize, to name a few.

"We have expended millions and millions and millions of dollars in litigation," Jardine said. "We need money to do things with operations and management. We need to get things back on track to where they ought to be. We need to deliver water and not serve as a protector."

Losing the litigation element, Jardine said, would provide the district with a budget it could use better to serve its clients and add credibility to the district on litigation matters. For all the construction and upgrades TCID has and will perform in the future, Jardine said he needs his budget restored.

Water users who own their rights could join the Newlands Water Protective Association to battle the United States government and other entities over water issues, Jardine added. TCID Board of Trustees President Ernie Schank said the contract signed in 1996 doesn't have any language describing TCID as a water association, as those associations help individuals with litigation.

Also, they said, TCID would be a more credible source as an outside entity if it could assist water users engaged in court.

It will make TCID more professional in cases," Schank said. "We would be expert witnesses and not be ridiculed."

Jardine said he and Schank will meet with the Department of Justice next week in hopes of settling the \$10 million claim from the Fernley flood in 2008. In addition to the Fernley claim, Jardine said he would like to wipe the recoupment issue off the books to free up more money for TCID to focus on other issues facing the district.

Another area where Jardine is looking to make headway is with Donner Lake. The lake, which acts as a storage facility for TCID and water users, is 50 percent owned by the district. Jardine wants to obtain a Warren Act contract, which would introduce more water into the district.

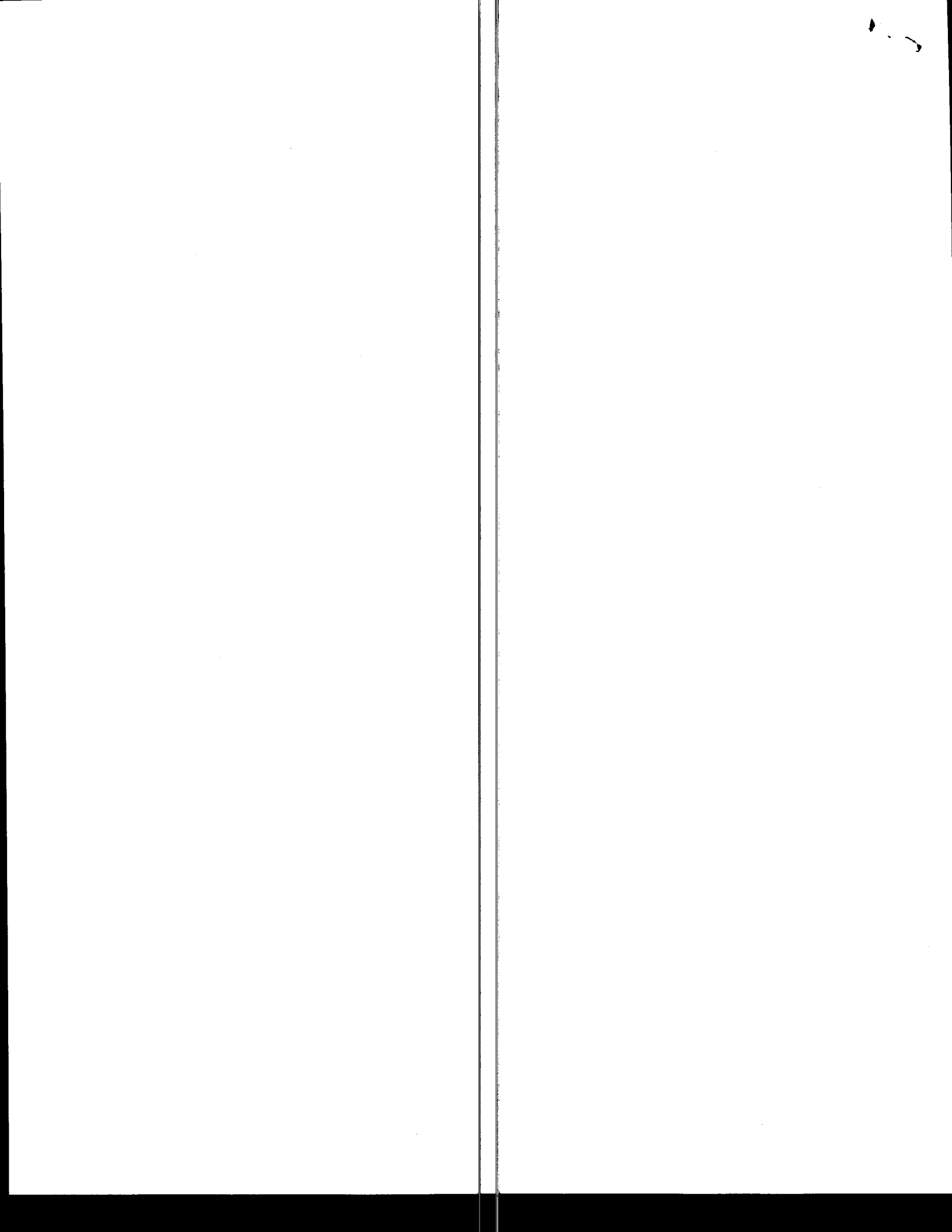
"TCID is owner of half the storage," Jardine said. "Who owns Donner? The water users. That's your jewel, too."

Of course, one of the big issues currently facing TCID is the closure of the Truckee Canal for maintenance operations. The canal has been closed since December, and Jardine said he hopes the Truckee Division will open this season.

In part with his upgrade solutions and modernization plan, Jardine told the audience 150 feet of the canal at Derby Dam had to be lined with concrete, which was recently finished. Now the district is working on replacing old lining that dates back more than 50 years.

Following recommendations from the Bureau of Reclamation, TCID is trying to repair facilities near the Fernley breach. The devices are cracked and need to be repaired, replaced or removed.

<http://www.lahontanvalleynews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110225/NEWS/110229944/1001&parentprofile=1045&template=printart>





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This article may be read online at:

<http://www.newsreview.com/reno/content?oid=1927673>

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Resurfaced in the water

Damning water report haunts TMWA

By Kat Kerlin

Local residents were alarmed earlier this month to hear that Reno drinking water ranked fifth worst in the nation. That is, those who hadn't already heard the news in December 2009 were alarmed. That's when the Environmental Working Group released its National Drinking Water Database. But the report turned up again this past January on AOL Daily Finance and—as is the nature of the internet—spread anew to other sources.

But some things have changed since the report was issued. Truckee Meadows Water Authority analyzed the same data and concluded that 35 percent of it was wrong. In February 2010, they sent a certified letter to EWG pointing out those errors. At the time, EWG said it would “revise the results whenever valid data are provided to us.” Yet no revisions have been made.

Included among the errors is the fact that EWG reported untreated ground water as drinking water. The EWG report also didn't consider that around 85 percent of Reno's drinking water comes from the Truckee River, with the remainder coming from small wells that tend to have more contaminants. A picture of overall water quality would require a weighted, or load-based average, says TMWA. “In calculating these average levels, EWG assumed each water source contributes equally to TMWA's water supply,” a follow-up letter by TMWA stated on Aug. 31, 2010. Other errors included samples for wells that



About 90 percent of Reno's drinking water comes from the relatively clean Truckee River, and Reno meets all state and federal water quality standards. But the Environmental Working Group still thinks Reno belongs on its list of the five worst cities for drinking water.

Photo By kat kerlin

Read the Environmental Working Group's National Drinking Water Database, and Reno's ranking in it, at tinyurl.com/fulltap.

weren't operating at the time, and some results were counted twice.

"What's very frustrating is Chris [Campbell of EWG] told us they would use the corrected data and modify the report," says TMWA general manager Mark Foree. "He said that would happen a year ago—it never happened. So here we are a year later, and someone pulls this old, inaccurate report off their website, and here we are again."

EWG press secretary Leeann Brown said via email that, in an attempt to look at all utilities equally, load-based averages weren't calculated for Reno or any utility.

"When we looked at the data for Reno they supplied for 2008, we realized it would be difficult to accurately portray the quality of the water in our database, as some wells with particularly high arsenic levels were being used, but mixed with non-contaminated surface water," she wrote. "This averages out to higher arsenic levels without factoring in the usage amount."

TMWA and all utilities in the database were given roughly six weeks to review the report before its release and provide corrections, but TMWA didn't do so. Foree says the findings were sent by email and "for whatever reason, we missed it."

As for why the information hasn't been updated on the database, Brown responded, "While we accounted for staff time and availability prior to the release, we did not have the same budget following, which unfortunately has resulted in the database remaining published with 2009 figures."

Yet EWG's Jane Houlihan thinks Reno belongs on the list. The senior vice president for research said, also via email, "Reno tap water fits the criteria laid out in EWG's rating system and belongs on the list." Though Reno water meets all state and federal standards, the EWG ratings, said Houlihan, reflect the fact that TMWA draws water from wells containing arsenic, disinfection byproducts and perchloroethylene "that would ideally not be present in any amount."



Washoe seeks ways to help homeowners with dry wells

By Susan Voyles • svoyles@rgj.com • February 22, 2011

People who deepened their wells may get help from Washoe County commissioners to correct the error in drilling municipal water wells near Callahan Ranch that have sucked homeowner wells dry and forced people to connect to the municipal water system.

The commission Tuesday night directed Water Resources Department Director Rosemary Menard to prepare a range of options in assisting about 500 residents in the area.

She recommended a reduction in connection fees, from \$14,382 to \$4,600, for a water line system already in place to serve 350 homes in the Callahan Ranch area south of Reno. A rebate, equal to that reduction, would be given to those who already paid to connect.

Fifth to 100 residents who deepened their wells now face hooking up, Menard said. For 150 people not living near the water lines on large parcels, Menard recommended they be paid \$5,000 to deepen their wells another 100 feet as more municipal well pumping will be done when ArrowCreek, Saddlehorn and other large approved projects are finished.

How the county water district would pay for the additional benefits also would be addressed in the forthcoming report. The district is supported by about 20,000 ratepayers.

Commissioner Kitty Jung wants county lawyers to investigate an extra fee to be imposed on approved empty lots in a larger area served by the Mount Rose/Galena area municipal wells to pay for rebates given to homeowners who drilled deeper.

Several years ago, residents were warned to drill deeper wells because a municipal water system was coming. Once installed, state law took away their right to drill deeper, forcing people to hook up once a water line was in front of their homes.

But the commission rejected offering a hardship program for families who cannot qualify for a county loan program to pay for the hookup costs over 20 years.

If there's a high likelihood the county would not be repaid, Chairman John Breternitz said he wasn't interested.

To a question from Jung, Menard said a lien couldn't be placed on these homes with any assurance the county would be first in line to be paid once the properties are sold.

The discussion among the commission and about 40 residents was mostly civil Tuesday night after Menard told 100 of them at a workshop last week that the county is taking the blame for their failed wells.

Resident James Mack was not happy.

"I live on Social Security," he told Commissioner David Humke who represents his area. "I want to know why you haven't been keeping me informed of stealing my water."

Some of the residents who have drilled deeper wells said they should get a full discount for hookup charges and a flat water rate rather than a metered rate once connected.

Deb Gunzel complained she lost 65 percent of her landscaping after two nearby wells began pumping within a quarter mile of her home.

In the summer when those wells dump water into a creek, she said she loses water for six hours every other day. But first, her well brings up muddy water. "It ruined my washing machine. My faucets," she said.

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She said the proposed connection fee would cost her \$10,000, \$4,600 to hook up and the rest to close the well and run a line from the house to a waterline in the street.

"We don't have \$10,000," she said.

Tom Carpenter said he also paid \$10,000 to deepen his well.

"This board has gotten us into this mess," he said, by approving additional subdivisions.

A closer look

What's next: The well issue is expected to be put on the agenda of the March 10 meeting of the Galena-Steamboat Citizens Advisory Board and then return to the commission in two to three months after more community workshops are held.

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NO, I have some rules!

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February 19, 2011

Winners: 160 area businesses participate in two Christmas toy programs

Everyone who contributed to The Salvation Army Angel Tree and Marines Toys for Tots toy programs. Nearly 160 businesses participated in the joint program, which provided 34,238 Christmas toys for more than 6,500 children. Media sponsors were Americom Radio and KTVN-TV Channel 2 News. Angel Tree site hosts included: the Alexander, Ashley Furniture, Baker & Taylor, Bally Technologies, Bank of America, Barnes Distribution, Bonaventure of Sparks, Cascades of the Sierra, Charles River Laboratories, Chase International, Curves, Digestive Health Associates, Dillard's, Ebara International, Employers Insurance, Farmer's Insurance, Ferrari-Lund Realty, GI Consultants, Gold's Gym, Grand Sierra Resort, Greater Nevada Credit Union, Greater Reno Church of Christ, Henry Schein, Home Fabrics, JCPenney Logistics, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Kohl's, Lifetouch Portrait Studios, L'uva Bella Wine Gallery, Mackay Rockhounds, Meadowood Mall, North Hills Chiropractic, WCSD Nutrition Services, Port of Subs, R.C. Willey, Regional Transportation Commission, Reno Diagnostic Center, Reno First United Methodist Church, Reno High School, South Reno United Methodist Church, Spine Nevada, Sports West Athletic Club, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, The Village at Iron Blossom, TriNet, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, United Blood Services, UNR Student Health Center, US Airways, US FoodService, Washoe County School District, Washoe Education Association and Wells Fargo. Walmart, JCPenney and Target also supported the toy program.

NV Energy donates to Family Shelter programs

NV Energy, for a \$2,000 grant to the Volunteers of America shelter programs. Also winners: Ted Power, for organizing an ice cream party at the Family Shelter; Baskin Robbins owners Pamela and Brand Culbertson, for donating ice cream, toppings and supplies; and employees of the Damonte Ranch Walmart Supercenter, for distributing 400 Have a Heart Day lunches for shelter residents on Valentines Day.

Atlantis donates \$8,000 to Make-A-Wish group

The Atlantis Casino Resort Spa, for donating \$8,111 collected from its fountains in 2010 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Northern Nevada to grant the wish of a 6-year-old from Spring Creek suffering from leukemia to visit Disney World. During the past 10 years, the Atlantis has donated more than \$30,000.

St. Mary's contributes \$50,000 for patient care

St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, for donating \$50,000 to Access to Healthcare Network's Patient Care Fund, which supports low-income members who need help paying for a portion of their medical needs. Also a winner is the John and Christine Worthington Fund at the Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, for contributing \$1,000 to the fund.

More winners: new providers to the network, including Stanley Pletch M.D., ophthalmology; Bob Tucker's Pharmacy, Carson City and Fernley offices; and David Fralick D.D.S.



February 15, 2011

Easy check of website showed report wrong

On Jan. 31, you printed an article about a study that claimed Reno's drinking water is the fifth worst in the country.

Our class didn't like that you printed this article without researching it. We would have liked to have seen the evidence that our water is so bad. You didn't even list the dangerous chemicals!

We simply Googled this and found that this report just isn't true. This took a group of 4th-graders less than 5 minutes to do. The Truckee Meadows Water Authority website had a report that showed our water to be very good. We also found that the Environmental Working Group tested well water before it was treated.

Your article scared us for no good reason. The next time you copy an article from another source, please make sure to check your facts. It's going to be hard for us to trust you in the future.

*Mr. Heim's 4th-grade class
Bailey Charter Elementary School
Reno*



For 4th-graders, water story was fishy

By Frank X. Mullen Jr.
fmullen@rgj.com

THE CLAIM

Reno Sparks has the fifth-worst drinking water in the nation

THE BACKGROUND

When teacher Doug Heim's fourth-grade class at Bailey Charter Elementary School in Reno read on the Internet last month that Reno Sparks has the fifth-worst drinking water in the U.S., the students were horrified.

"I saw wide eyes, shock and fear," Heim said. "The article said the water that they drank every day was really dangerous. I thought that this might be a teachable moment."

The article was briefly available Jan. 31 on the RGJ.com and on many media sites and blogs. RGJ editors removed the Associated Press story within hours, and it did not appear in the print edition. But versions of the "worst tap water" articles remain on many sites, including those of newspapers, TV news stations and blogs.

The class investigated the claim that our tap water is a toxic "chemical cocktail." They researched water quality testing methods and read reports from the Truckee Meadows Water Authority. They traced the source of the story to the Washington-based Environmental Working Group, which released the study in December 2009.

"Our class didn't like that you printed this article without researching it," the students wrote to the RGJ. "We would have liked to have seen the evidence that our water is so bad. You didn't even list the dangerous chemicals! We simply Googled this, and found that this report just isn't true... We also found that the Environmental Working Group tested well water before it was treated. Your article scared us for no good reason. The next



Doug Heim's fourth-grade class at Bailey Charter Elementary School in Reno

HANDBOUT

time you copy an article from another source, please make sure to check your facts."

The newspaper had removed the AP story from RGJ.com on Jan. 31 for the very reasons later cited by the students. The original report had been disputed by sources in RGJ stories in 2009 and last year. This year, the wire service had picked up the story from the Las Vegas Sun, which got its information from AOL Finance, an online blog. AOL Finance published the material last month.

TMWA officials in April and in August sent the Environmental Working Group a two-page letter objecting to the "erroneous and distorted data" used for the report and said the information was "irresponsible, incorrect and misleading." The utility listed rebuttals to the group's findings and shared water quality data.

"(The fourth-graders) did the right thing," said Paul Miller, manager of water quality and operations for TMWA. "If you have

concerns, do some research or give us a call. With all the stuff on the Internet, you have to sort out fact from fiction and be aware of people's agendas."

Leeann Brown, press secretary for the Environmental Working Group, said the organization has received updated and corrected information from Reno and several of the 100 cities listed in the report. She noted that utilities had six weeks to submit corrected data before the

report was made public in 2009, but many did not do so until after the report was released.

"We are currently diving back into the data from utilities and will make dated revisions as necessary once our analysis is complete," she said. She said it's possible the city rankings will be revised.

The website now states that updates to the 2009 report are pending. It also notes that the group is in favor of stricter water quality standards and that

current federal standards for tap water (which TMWA meets) are no guarantee of safety.

Heim said his pupils still drink the water.

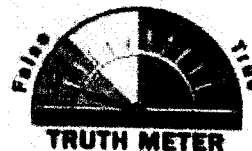
"They learned that just because something is on the Internet doesn't mean it's true," he said.

And the 16 young fact-checkers learned that one-sided stories, incomplete data or misinformation can zip around the globe before the truth can even turn on its laptop. And that old news can become new again at the press of an "enter" key thousands of miles away.

THE VERDICT

While the Environmental Working Group might be correct that the nation needs better water quality standards, its 2009 report has several errors relating to the Truckee Meadows Water Authority's data on water quality. The report is misleading in that it implies tap water is unsafe when some of the data applies to untreated well water.

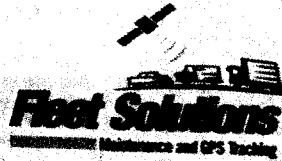
The claim that Reno Sparks has "the fifth-worst water" in the nation is not supportable.



ASK FACT CHECKER

Frank X. Mullen Jr. is a senior reporter for the Reno Gazette-Journal. Fact Checker is our weekly analysis on whether the facts and figures being floated in the media are true.

Have something that you think we need to get to the bottom of? E-mail us at factchecker@rgj.com or call Kelly Ann Scott at 775-327-6785.



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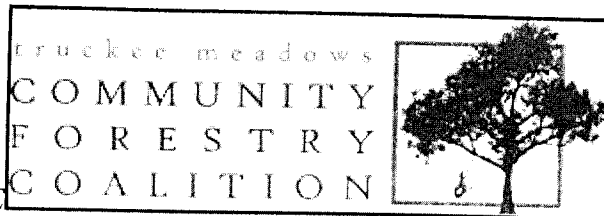
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Truckee Meadows Community Forestry Coalition Reminds Residents to Care for Their Trees During Winter

February 8, 2011
By [ThisIsReno](#)



SUBMITTED NEWS RELEASE

Northern Nevada is known for cold and dry snaps in the winter and spring months. These fluctuations can cause damage to your trees, especially young and newly planted trees, which are most vulnerable to cold and dry weather.

Truckee Meadows Community Forestry Coalition offers these easy-to-follow tips that can help your trees survive the next couple of months, and thrive when the weather warms.

- If your trees have not received water from Mother Nature for two to four weeks, it is time to provide some supplemental watering with a hose. Make sure you water when temperatures are above 40 degrees and early enough in the day that the water will not freeze, which can cause damage to the tree.
- Do not spray tree trunks with water in order to reduce the risk of frost injuries or winter burn.
- Help keep moisture in soil and regulate soil temperature by putting a three to four inch deep layer of organic mulch around your tree.
- Heavy snow on tree limbs should be removed to avoid breakage.
- If winter has a particularly warm day, consider deep root watering to break up the soil. Avoid fertilizing before spring, which can prematurely wake up the tree's roots.

Maintaining the health of your trees, and keeping them adequately watered, is important year-round. If you have a tree condition of concern, use the Ask An Arborist forum at www.communityforestry.org for assistance. The Community Forestry Coalition's website provides a wealth of information on tree care in the high desert climate of the Truckee Meadows.

The Mission of the Truckee Meadows Community Forestry Coalition is to enhance the protection and preservation of the public and private community forest through education, research, conservation and collaborative policy development.

Related Posts:

- [Community Forestry Coalition hosts free workshop](#)
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Earth-friendly gardening: What's good for your pocketbook is good for the Earth

By Heidi Kratsch • University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension • February 5, 2011

Ever wonder whether your yard is truly green? Yeah -- the plants are green (most of the time), but what about your gardening practices? And just what does it mean to be green anyway? Can our yards be beautiful -- and earth-friendly?

I'm often asked this question, and my answer is a resounding, "Yes, we can." It takes some thought and careful planning, though, to achieve a yard that is non-polluting, low maintenance and water-conserving.

Here are some guidelines to help you get started:

First, get out in your yard and start taking notes. Are there plants that never seem happy, no matter what you do? Are there low-lying areas on your property? From which direction do the prevailing winds blow? Which side of the house faces south or southwest? You need to know the answers to these questions so you can make sure you put the right plants in the right place. A sun-loving plant placed on the north side of your home will never thrive. Likewise, a plant that loves well-drained soil will never grow properly if its roots are in soil that is kept constantly moist by water draining from other parts of your yard.

Second, take an honest inventory of how much time and effort you spend on your yard to keep it looking good. Are the plants in your yard adapted to the extreme high desert climate of Northern Nevada? The less adapted a plant is to its surroundings, the more resources you will need to use to keep that plant healthy and vigorous. A well-adapted plant requires less water, less fertilizer, and fewer pesticides for good health than a plant that is not adapted to our climate.

Third, once you have those climate-adapted plants, make sure not to over-water or over-fertilize them. If you do, one of two things will happen: either your plants won't be able to use the extra water and nutrients, and they will be leached into the groundwater and ultimately to our rivers; or they will use the extra to put on fast, scraggly growth

that needs to be mowed, trimmed, pruned, hedged or blown frequently.

This usually means more work for you, but more importantly, more hydrocarbons spewed into our air from the equipment used for their maintenance. Plants grow, and they will always require some labor. But plants adapted to our climate require less to stay beautiful and functional.

Finally, think about the big picture. Don't make the mistake of paving over your yard in the name of sustainability! Planted areas keep our cities cool and our energy bills low. They intercept runoff from extreme rain events and prevent our soils from eroding.


According to the U.S. Forest Service Center for Urban Forest Research, just three trees properly placed around a house can save up to 30 percent of your energy use for heating and cooling.

Plant evergreen trees about 30 feet to the north and northwest of your home to block cold winter winds. Plant broadleaf trees on the west and southwest sides to provide relief from the hot afternoon summer sun.

Protect those trees by placing a ring of organic mulch around them out to the drip line.

Mulch keeps tree roots cool and moist, and protects the tree canopy from the drying effects of reflected heat and light. Limit turfgrass areas to spaces used for recreation or entertaining.

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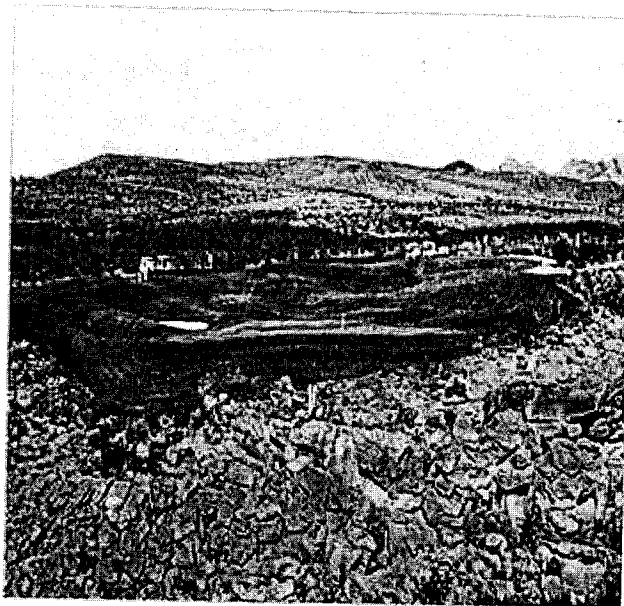
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These simple practices will keep your water and fuel bills lower and your plants beautiful by providing an oasis that can sustain both humans and the earth.

Dr. Heidi Kratsch is the western area horticulture specialist for the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension in Reno. She can be reached at kratschh@unce.unr.edu.



(Provided to the Reno Gazette-Journal)



Plants adapted to our high-desert climate can be beautiful, as well as water-conserving and easy to maintain. (Provided to the Reno Gazette-Journal)

Details

Use the following websites to learn more about our climate, soils and sustainable landscaping:

- » National Weather Service Forecast Office, Western Nevada: Get current and historic weather data for your location. www.wrh.noaa.gov/rev.
- » USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Finder: Type in your ZIP code and learn your hardiness zone. www.garden.org/zipzone.
- » Truckee Meadows Water Authority Water Efficient Landscape Guide: Includes information on specific plants, design and irrigation tips. www.tmwlandscapeguide.com/landscape_guide/interactive/index.php.
- » Washoe Evapotranspiration Project: Helps you adjust your irrigation system to plant water needs. www.washoeet.dri.edu.
- » USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey: Learn more about the soils in your area. <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>.
- » Central Utah Water Conservancy District's Value Landscaping tool: Assess what your landscape costs you to install and maintain, and how changes to the landscape will affect your costs. <http://vle.cuwcd.com/default.aspx>

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Development: Sparks water quality lab eyes expansion

By Bob Brundage • bbrundag@rgj.com • February 4, 2011

Western Environmental Testing Laboratory has found a growing need for its services in Nevada, California and Colorado during its short existence, and now it is trying to stretch its reach even farther.

"We're definitely looking to stay on the West Coast, in Arizona, Utah, Oregon and Idaho," operations manager Nick Ross said. "Those are the states we're looking at."

Founded in 2002 with five employees, WETLAB now employees 28 at a state-of-the-art laboratory in Sparks that was completed in 2006 and recently expanded by 11,000 square feet.

There also is a new office in Elko. The office started in a part-time employee's home in 2007 and moved into a larger facility in 2009.

So what does the fast-growing company do? WETLAB monitors water contaminants for its clients. The company monitors the water in Lake Tahoe as well as the ground water in the Elko mining region.

"We do a lot of continuum monitoring, that's the bulk of what we do," Ross said. "Mining companies have to be monitored monthly, quarterly or yearly, depending on the size of their operations, to make sure they aren't introducing contaminants into the ground water."

"The different towns or cities or counties that surround Lake Tahoe have to do monthly, quarterly or yearly monitoring because their goal is to preserve Lake Tahoe, so they're regulated for different types of contaminants than mining companies. Their main goal is to maintain the clarity of Lake Tahoe."

Company President Michelle Sherven said WETLAB focuses on the nutrients that flow into the lake that affect its clarity.

"At Tahoe, they do different things to try to prevent cliffs and such from eroding and draining in the lake," she said. "We give them the data they need. Several agencies are monitoring the lake to see what impact they have in preventing sediment from

running off into the lake."

The data WETLAB compiles is not analyzed by the company.

"We're a fairly neutral party," Sherven said. "We don't interpret the data, we just provide the data."

As WETLAB has expanded geographically, it has added a diverse range of clients, Ross said. WETLAB works with wastewater utilities, industrial water users, research facilities and real-estate developers that need to complete projects while meeting environmental standards.

Geothermal exploration also has been a benefit to company.

"Being a local company, the local economy has been really good to us," Sherven said. "There also is the resurgence in geothermal exploration, which has monitoring requirements. We do a lot of work with local municipalities and business in town. We really attribute our success to our relations with our clients. They have been really helpful in supporting us."

WETLAB


WHAT: The inorganic testing laboratory offers clients lab environment testing, including designed for Northern Nevada and Northern California

WHEN: The company was founded in 2002, moved into its new Sparks lab in 2006 and in 2009 opened an Elko location.

ONLINE: www.wetlaboratory.com

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TMWA GLENDALE WATER SUPPLY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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MARCH 2011

A revision of the existing diversion system for the Glendale Water Treatment Plant, the project was initiated to "improve Truckee Meadows Water Authority's (TMWA's) water service to the Truckee Meadows," according to the TMWA website. "Improvement to the existing structure is necessary to maintain a dependable supply of water to the community."

The project was to construct a "permanent, and reliable structure" to divert water to the Glendale Treatment Plant, while preserving the native environment and wildlife habitat of the Truckee River by removing existing rock and concrete diversions that block fish passage. New construction included a low-profile channel weir designed to look as natural as possible. New fish screens and a "pool and shoot" fishway were incorporate to improve fish and recreational passage.

The Glendale Treatment Plant, which treats over 25 million gallons of water per day, has been in operation since 1976, with upgrades and other major improvements. Previous diversions have been constructed with "rock and concrete rubble structure placed in the river" which does not provide adequate flow. TMWA uses river water as drought reserves in time of severe drought, meaning that flow to this facility is critical to water service in the Truckee Meadows area.

PROJECT GALLERY

Click thumbnail for full sized image.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

- NAME**
TMWA Glendale Water Supply Improvement Project
- LOCATION**
Sparks, NV
- COMPLETION DATE**
March 2011
- VALUE**
\$3,900,000
- OWNER**
Truckee Meadows Water Authority
- DESIGNER**
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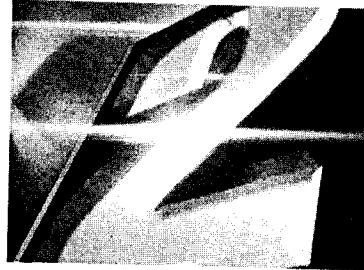
TMWA Blasts Water Report

Posted: Feb 01, 2011 6:43 PM PST

Updated: Feb 01, 2011 6:51 PM PST

Bill Brown

Channel 2 News



The Truckee Meadows Water Authority is blasting a report that says Reno's drinking water supply is one of the worst in the nation.

TMWA says the report is at least two years old and doesn't even have accurate information. "We called them, we provided them with the corrected information; we called them on numerous occasions...they said they would correct that data...they didn't do that...," says TMWA General Manager Mark Foree.

For instance, the Environmental Working Group, the author of the study, used untreated water samples as treated samples.

The untreated water never gets to you and me and TMWA says it skewed the data.

They say that's just one example of inaccurate work and analysis.

Then two years later another news service picks up on it...and it's news again. TMWA says it's still wrong. "The take away message to customers is that our water is of outstanding quality. It is very safe. And you should have no questions about drinking it. It's really really high quality water."

TMWA says it has met every EPA and state water standard since it was formed ten years ago.

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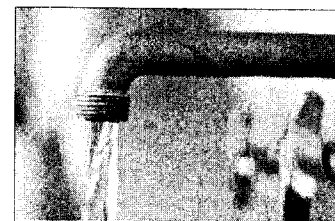
10 American Cities With the Worst Drinking Water

DailyFinance Mobile Posted 10:00 AM 01/31/11

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Unknown to most Americans, a surprising number of U.S. cities have drinking water with unhealthy levels of chemicals and contaminants. In fact, some organizations and state environmental agencies that collect and analyze water data say the level of chemicals in some Americans' drinking water not only exceeds recommended health guideline but the pollutants even exceed the limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the national legal authority in these matters.



Corbis

The website [24/7 Wall St.](#) examined the quality of water supplies in most major America cities, using data collected from multiple sources for five years (ending in 2009) by Environmental Working Group (EWG), based in Washington, D.C. The fact that the data covered a half-decade is important because it shows that the presence of certain chemicals is persistent.

Cities in Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Georgia provided insufficient data to be included in EWG's database. Some other major cities outside of these states also failed to submit information, including Detroit, Salt Lake City and Washington, D.C.

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Test results from EWG's national database covered "a total of 316 contaminants in water supplied to 256 million Americans in 48,000 communities in 45 states." According to the data, among the contaminants were 202 chemicals that aren't subject to any government regulation or safety standards for drinking water.

Based on the EWG's methodology, 24/7 Wall St. came up with its 10 worst cities list. These cities' water quality rank is based on three metrics, in order of increasing importance:

- The percentage of chemicals found based on the number that were tested for
- The total number of contaminants found
- The most dangerous average level of a single pollutant.

Here's that list, in descending order, with the city's water utility in parenthesis:

10. Jacksonville, Fla. (JEA)

Located on the northeast coast of Florida, Jacksonville is the state's largest city. According to EWG, 23 different toxic chemicals were found in Jacksonville's water supply. The chemicals most frequently discovered in high volumes were trihalomethanes, which consist of four different cleaning byproducts -- one of which is chloroform. Many trihalomethanes are believed to be carcinogenic. Over the five-year testing period, unsafe levels of trihalomethanes were detected during each of the 32 months of testing, and levels deemed illegal by the EPA were detected in 12 of those months. During at least one testing period, trihalomethane levels were measured at nearly twice the EPA legal limit. Chemicals like arsenic and lead were also detected at levels exceeding health guidelines.

9. San Diego (San Diego Water Department)

Located on the Pacific in Southern California, San Diego is the country's eighth-largest city. According to California's Department of Public Health, San Diego's drinking water system contained eight chemicals exceeding health guidelines as well as two chemicals that exceeded the EPA's legal limit. In total, 20 contaminants have been found. One of those in excess of the EPA limit was trihalomethanes. The other was manganese, a natural element that's a byproduct of industrial manufacturing and can be poisonous to humans.

8. North Las Vegas (City of North Las Vegas Utilities Department)

North Las Vegas's water supply mostly comes from groundwater and the Colorado River, and doesn't contain chemicals exceeding legal limits. However, the water supply did contain 11 chemicals that exceeded health guidelines set by federal and state health agencies. The national average for chemicals found in cities' water exceeding health guidelines is four. North Las Vegas had a total of 26 contaminants, compared with the national average of eight. The water contained an extremely high level of uranium, a radioactive element.

7. Omaha (Metropolitan Utilities District)

The land-locked city of Omaha gets its water from the Missouri and Platte Rivers, as well as from groundwater. Of the 148 chemicals tested for in Omaha, 42 were detected in some amount, 20 of which were above health guidelines, and four of those were detected in illegal amounts. These were atrazine, trihalomethanes, nitrate and nitrite, and manganese. Atrazine is an herbicide that has been shown to cause birth defects. Nitrate is found in fertilizer, and nitrite is used for curing meat. Manganese was detected at 40 times the legal limit during one month of testing.

6. Houston (City of Houston Public Works)

Houston is the fourth-largest U.S. city. It gets its water from sources such as the Trinity River, the San Jacinto Rivers and Lake Houston. Texas conducted 22,083 water quality tests between 2004 and 2007 on Houston's water supply, and found 18 chemicals that exceeded federal and state health guidelines, compared to the national average of four. Three chemicals exceeded EPA legal health standards, against the national average of 0.5 chemicals. A total of 46 pollutants were detected, compared to the national average of eight. The city water has contained illegal levels of alpha particles, a form of radiation. Similarly, haloacetic acids, from various disinfection byproducts, have been detected.

5. Reno (Truckee Meadows Water Authority)

Reno gets most of its water from the Truckee River, which flows from Lake Tahoe. Of the 126 chemicals tested for in Reno over four years, 21 were discovered in the city's water supply, eight of which were detected in levels above EPA health guidelines, and three of these occurred in illegal amounts. These were manganese, tetrachloroethylene and arsenic. Tetrachloroethylene is a fluid used for dry cleaning and as an industrial solvent, and is deemed a likely carcinogenic by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Arsenic is a byproduct of herbicides and pesticides, and is extremely poisonous to humans. During at least one month of testing, arsenic levels were detected at roughly two and a half times the legal limit.

4. Riverside County, Calif. (Eastern Municipal Water District)

Riverside county is a 7,200-square-mile area located north of San Diego, part of California's "Inland Empire." The county is primarily located in desert territory, and so the water utilities draw their supply from the Bay Delta, which is miles to the north. The water in Riverside County contained 13 chemicals that exceeded recommended health guidelines over the four tested years, and one that exceeded legal limits. In total, 22 chemicals were detected in the district's water supply. The contaminant exceeding legal health standards was tetrachloroethylene.

3. Las Vegas (Las Vegas Valley Water District)

Located in the Mojave desert, Las Vegas gets its water from the Colorado River through miles-long intake pipes. While its water doesn't exceed the legal limits for any single type of contaminant, Las Vegas's water has a large range of pollutants. Of the 125 chemicals tested for over a five-year period, 30 were identified in some amount, and 12 were found in levels that exceeded EPA health guidelines. These chemicals included radium-226, radium-228, arsenic and lead. The two radium isotopes are commonly found around uranium deposits and are hazardous to human health, even in small quantities.

2. Riverside, Calif. (City of Riverside Public Utilities)

Riverside, with a population slightly greater than 300,000, gets most of its drinking supply from groundwater. Regulators in the city of Riverside, which has a different water-treatment facility than the rest of Riverside County, detected 15 chemicals that exceeded health guidelines and one that exceeded legal standards. In total, 30 chemicals were found. Since 2004, the water has almost consistently been riddled with alpha particle activity, traces of bromoform (a form of trihalomethane) and uranium, causing an unusually unhealthy water supply.

1. Pensacola, Fla. (Emerald Coast Water Utility)

Located on the Florida Panhandle along the Gulf of Mexico, Pensacola is Florida's westernmost major city. Analysts say it has the worst water quality in the country. Of the 101 chemicals tested for over five years, 45 were discovered. Of them, 21 were discovered in unhealthy amounts. The worst of these were radium-228 and -228, trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, alpha particles, benzene and lead. Pensacola's water was also found to contain cyanide and chloroform. The combination of these chemicals makes Pensacola's water supply America's most unhealthy.

Filed under: [Columns](#), [Health Care](#)

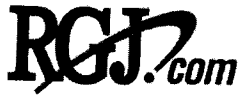
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Report: Reno has nation's fifth worst drinking water

February 1, 2011

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas ranks third, Reno ranks fifth and North Las Vegas ranks eighth on a top 10 list of American cities with the worst drinking water.


The Las Vegas Sun reported Monday that the AOL Daily Finance list was based on five years of data collected from multiple sources by the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Environmental Working Group.

Las Vegas water contained 30 identified pollutants, Reno water contained 21 chemicals and North Las Vegas water contained 11.

Water quality rankings were determined by measuring the percentage of chemicals found, the number of contaminants found and the most dangerous average level of a single pollutant.

Roger Buehrer of the Southern Nevada Water Authority said the study was outdated.

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Vegas 3rd, Reno 5th, North Vegas 8th on water list

Page Last Updated: Tuesday February 1, 2011 7:11am PST

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Information from: Las Vegas Sun, <http://www.lasvegassun.com>

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Reno and Vegas in Top 5 of Worst Drinking Water... in 2009

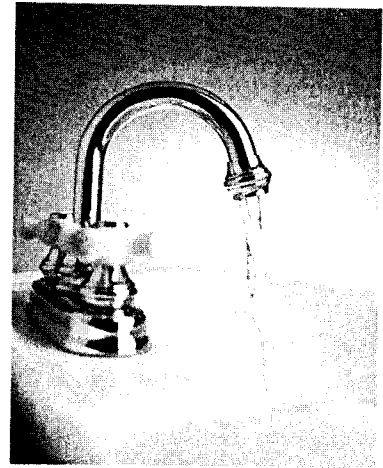
Las Vegas ranks third, Reno ranks fifth and North Las Vegas ranks eighth on a top 10 list of American cities with the worst drinking water.

Posted: 9:55 PM Jan 31, 2011

Reporter: AP/Staff

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But the report was released in 2009, and Truckee Meadows Water Authority and state officials say there have been no violations regarding Reno's water, saying whatever information EWG used for the report is incorrect. In fact, TMWA sent a letter to EWG more than a year ago to correct the issue, something that was never done.

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According to the 2009 report, Las Vegas water contained 30 identified pollutants, Reno water contained 21 chemicals and North Las Vegas water contained 11.


Water quality rankings were determined by measuring the percentage of chemicals found, the number of contaminants found and the most dangerous average level of a single pollutant.

Some cities including Detroit, Salt Lake City and Washington, D.C., didn't submit information for the report.

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A law with teeth

Fluoridated water remains a touchy subject in Reno

By [Kat Kerlin](#)

For the first time in nearly 50 years, the federal government announced this month it plans to lower the recommended limit for fluoride in water supplies. Yet, in Reno, the water has never been fluoridated—an issue that remains contentious.

“Fluoride has been, throughout the country and this area, one of the more volatile water quality issues,” says Paul Miller, Truckee Meadows Water Authority manager of operations and water quality.

A bill to fluoridate local water in order to improve dental care and prevent cavities among residents was shot down by the state Assembly in 2009. Part of the reason was financial: At the time, TMWA estimated it would cost about \$5 million to start fluoridation and about \$1.5 million a year to continue it. That would also raise water bills by about 40 to 75 cents a month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 64 percent of Americans drink fluoridated water. Yet, the idea has not been popular in Reno.

“There are people who are very strong proponents of fluoride,” says Miller. “They say it’s for the betterment of the population and kids who need better tooth care. The American Dental Association strongly advocates fluoride. ... But a lot of people don’t want fluoride. The strongest, most common argument is people don’t want this forced upon them. They don’t want—I don’t want to call it medication—this constituent in the water.”



Paul Miller of TMWA says most local drinking water comes from the Truckee River, which is “non-detect” for fluoride.

Photo By kat Kerlin

[More information](#) about the EPA’s decision about fluoride.

Yet none of that is why the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is lowering the recommended limit for fluoride to 0.7 milligrams per liter down from a range of 0.7 to 1.2 milligrams, or why the Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing whether its maximum level of 4 milligrams per liter is too high. Nor is the decision linked to conspiracy theorists' fears that fluoridated water is a government ploy to control minds. Rather, the issue is fluorosis.

Fluorosis is a splotchy tooth condition. The CDC reports that nearly 23 percent of children ages 12 to 15 had fluorosis in 1986 and 1987, compared to 41 percent between 1999 and 2004.

In deciding to lower the limit, the feds considered that, compared to the 1940s, when water fluoridation was first introduced in the United States, water is now only one of several sources of fluoride, such as toothpaste and mouth rinses.

Fluoride is a mineral found naturally in water and soil, even in non-fluoridated places. On the 2008 annual water report from TMWA using 2007 data, fluoride levels were listed at 0.14 milligrams per liter. Miller said 0.3 milligrams per liter of fluoride was detected at one well in 2008, but that represented only half a percent of the area's total drinking water. The report didn't even list fluoride because it wasn't detected in the 2009 data. Miller added that the highest level for fluoride he's ever seen from a single well in the area is 0.4 milligrams per liter.

"We sample sources during the course of the year, and we're required to report the highest concentration detected from any single source. In any year, our largest source of drinking water—about 85 percent of it—was from the Truckee River. The Truckee River has been non-detect for fluoride."



This article was printed from the Green Guide section of the *Reno News & Review*, originally published January 27, 2011.

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Heavy metal

By Kat Kerlin

Reno area residents will soon have a better idea of exactly how much hexavalent chromium—a.k.a. chromium 6, a.k.a. the “**Erin Brockovich chemical**”—is in their drinking water. The U.S. **Environmental Protection Agency** has asked the **Truckee Meadows Water Authority** and other national water utilities to sample local waters for the carcinogenic metal. The two agencies discussed last week how to carry out that suggestion. Their action follows a damning national report released in December from the nonprofit **Environmental Working Group**, which detected **chromium 6** in 31 of the 35 cities from which it took water samples. **Reno** was one of the cities sampled, but the group found no detectable levels here. It also sampled **Las Vegas** water, which showed levels of 0.06 parts per billion. That’s more than the maximum level of 0.02 ppb that the California EPA—the only state where utilities are required to test for chromium 6—has proposed to protect against excess cancer risk.

Paul Miller, TMWA manager of operations and water quality, said the EPA currently requires local utilities to take samples for “**total chromium**,” of which chromium 6 is one part. However, these new discussions with the EPA mean TMWA will take separate samples specifically to determine chromium 6 concentrations. The results from that data are expected to be published in TMWA’s **2011 annual water quality report**, and perhaps sooner on the agency’s website.



TMWA offers \$850,000 in incentives to shed 14-20 jobs

By Jeff DeLong • jdelong@rgj.com • January 19, 2011

Up to 20 employees of the Truckee Meadows' primary water provider could leave their jobs this summer under a voluntary workforce reduction adopted Wednesday.

The move approved by the Truckee Meadows Water Authority is designed to save between \$1 million and \$1.5 million in annual operating expenses as the utility struggles through a still-weak economy, said Mark Foree, general manager.

The utility's board OK'd a one-time expenditure of \$850,000 for incentive payments to workers leaving their jobs early.

"It's a fact of life these days you have to do more work with (fewer) people," Foree said. "It will be a challenge."


Eleven positions at TMWA were left vacant through attrition in 2009 and 2010. The utility now employs 167 full-time workers, Foree said. The utility hopes to trim that number by 14 to 20 more through the voluntary workforce reduction.

It's necessary, Foree said, because the recession dramatically reduced income from water sales as new development stalled and more homes and businesses became vacant.

"We don't have anything resembling moderate economic activity" justifying current staffing levels, Foree said. Water production last year was 69,100 acre-feet, a level not seen in the Reno area since 1998. Revenue from water sales remained flat at about \$71 million.

Economic conditions and weather conditions limiting hydroelectric revenue also virtually "nullified" rate increases approved in 2009 and 2010 to help offset declining revenues, according to a utility report.

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