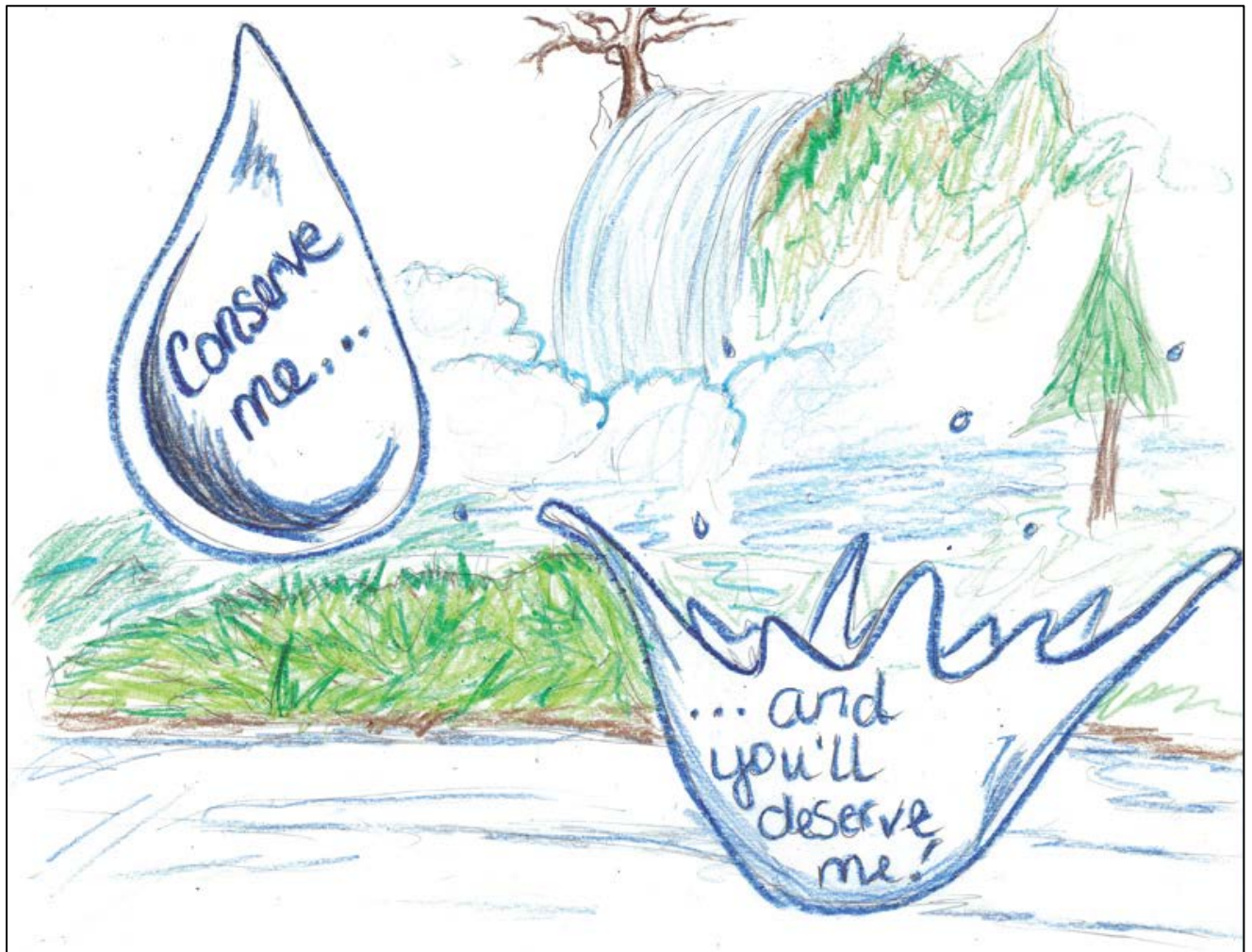


TMWA Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Press Clippings

January 7, 2014 – March 7, 2014



*Desiree Villareal (Lincoln Park Elementary School)
2010 Poster Art Contest - Second Place, Grades 4-6*

Rim Fire's effects on Sierra lakes studied

Written by Jeff DeLong

Jan. 6, 2014 |

rgj.com



In this photo provided by the U.S. Forest Service, a member of the BLM Silver State Hotshot crew using a drip torch to set back fires on the southern flank of the Rim Fire on Pilot Peak, Calif., Friday, Aug. 30, 2013. The blaze has scorched 343 square miles of brush, oaks and pines and 11 homes, as of Saturday Aug. 31, 2013. (AP Photo/U.S. Forest Service) / AP

Rim Fire at a glance:

- Started by a hunter's illegal campfire on Aug. 17
- Declared fully contained Oct. 24
- Charred more than 400 square miles, including parts of Yosemite National Park
- Destroyed 11 homes and caused about \$70 million in damage. Source: RGJ research

How the Sierra's largest wildfire affected Lake Tahoe and several other mountain lakes is the focus of a new study by scientists.

Researchers based at UC Davis' Tahoe Environmental Research Center, the University of Nevada, Reno and three other universities began working as the Rim Fire was still smoldering last

summer.

The effort was to gauge how the massive blaze affected water clarity, algae nutrients, light transmission and the aquatic food web at lakes close to the flames and others downwind that were smoked out for weeks.

"The Rim Fire, obviously, had such a big impact in the Sierra," said John Reuter, associate director for the Tahoe research center. "What we're looking for are the impacts on aquatic ecosystems that this fire had. How does this affect lake ecology?"

Started by a hunter's illegal campfire on Aug. 17 and not declared fully contained until Oct. 24, the Rim Fire charred more than 400 square miles, including parts of Yosemite National Park, destroyed 11 homes and caused about \$70 million in damage.

Smoke from the fire wafted north, clouding the skies of the Reno-Tahoe area for weeks on end. Another fire west of Lake Tahoe that burned during much of the same period also hazed the region's skies at times.

Scientists were quick to realize opportunity presented by studying a wildfire of such magnitude. They obtained a so-called "rapid response grant" offered by the National Science Foundation, a program designed to bypass the typical and often lengthy grant application and peer review process and allow quick study of major ecological events such a wildfire, hurricane or big oil spill.

Two lakes located within the core of the fire area, Cherry Lake and Lake Eleanor, are being examined in the research. Lake Tahoe and nearby Cascade Lake, more than 100 miles away but heavily affected by smoke, are also under the microscope. Two other lakes south of the Mammoth area — not affected by the fire — will be studied for comparison. Teams that hit the lakes during and shortly after the fire will return after the first big storm event, when those lakes in the fire area are expected to be dramatically affected.

Chances 'slim' for full Sierra snowpack recovery

Written by Jeff DeLong

Jan. 31, 2014 |

rgj.com



Sierra snowpack
Lake Tahoe Basin: 25 percent of average.
Truckee River Basin: 15 percent of average.
Carson River Basin: 32 percent of average.
Walker River Basin: 26 percent of average.
Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

It would have to snow two and a half times the normal amount over the remainder of this winter to end with an average snowpack in the mountains, experts said Friday.

Federal snow surveyors hiked to a measuring site near Mount Rose Summit to confirm what's readily apparent – the Sierra snowpack is only about a

quarter of what it should be with the arrival of February, less in places.

The snowstorm that hit the Reno-Tahoe region Wednesday and Thursday dropped significant snow. In places, up to 2 feet of fresh powder layered the mountains by the time clouds cleared. Skiers are rejoicing but the folks tasked with measuring the snowpack and gauging what kind of runoff to expect for water supplies during coming months know the what the odds are of catching up after a mostly dry December and January.

"It's pretty slim," said Beau Uriona, a Utah-based hydrologist with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service temporarily assigned as the area's acting water supply specialist.

Uriona and a colleague manually measured the snow at Mount Rose to confirm readings from an automated "Snotel" device at that location.

On Friday, the snowpack there averaged 24 inches deep with 3.4 inches of water content, only about 19 percent of what it should be for the date. This week's snowstorm generally bumped up the numbers by 5 to 10 percent across the region but they're still far below where they should be. The Lake Tahoe's Basin's snowpack Friday was 25 percent of average and the Truckee River Basin's snowpack measured only 15 percent.

January and February are typically the most important months for snowfall and after January ended so dry, February and March will have to be big performers if the region is to be rescued from a third winter of drought.

"Not having any precipitation in the January month really made it hard to get back to a normal condition," Uriona said. "We need roughly 250 percent of average from here on out to reach an average condition."

There's no doubt this week's storm was welcome if for no other reason than it "helped us not get into the hole more," said Federal Water Master Chad Blanchard. The problem is, it would have taken nine such storms for January to have ended normal in terms of mountain snowpack, Blanchard said.

"We're that far behind," he said. "It was a good storm but we obviously need a lot more. We just haven't had any precipitation for so long."

Lack of a deep mountain snowpack is only part of the problem, Blanchard said. The other part is the extremely dry state of soils after two back-to-back dry winters. That means much of the precipitation that does fall, as well as melting snow in the spring, will be simply soak up in the ground rather than flow into streams, lakes and reservoirs where that water is so badly needed.

"Even if we ended up with a huge dump of snow we will have an inefficient runoff because it will soak into the sponge," Blanchard said.

EDITORIAL: Open search for next water chief

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

January 4, 2014 - 9:02pm

The rush to replace retiring water czar Pat Mulroy is a testament to her political clout and the importance of the valley's water agencies. Nevada's power brokers — Ms. Mulroy among them — have no interest in seeing an unfamiliar outsider fill her considerable leadership void. Not when the job of keeping potable water flowing from every tap, every minute of every day, is at stake.

But even by Nevada's low standards, this power play is especially hurried. It could very well be wrapped up by Tuesday, when the Las Vegas Valley Water District board meets to consider the selection of a new general manager. That person would be a slam dunk to assume Ms. Mulroy's other, bigger title as general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

There has been no regional or national search, no public interviews of candidates and no posting of required or desired qualifications — just the usual behind-the-scenes dealmaking. The candidates are John Entsminger, Ms. Mulroy's deputy and preferred successor, and Clark County Commissioner Larry Brown, who wants to make the ethically challenging jump from elected steward to public administrator.

County commissioners sit as the water district's board; Mr. Brown is asking his elected peers to effectively vote him out of office and into a new job before his term expires.

The jockeying for this job is so intense, Mr. Brown told the Review-Journal's editorial board last week, that he was offered the No. 2 job at the water agencies if he stepped aside and cleared the way for Mr. Entsminger to become No. 1. Mr. Brown said he refused.

Ms. Mulroy is correct in touting Mr. Entsminger's resume. The attorney has worked with Ms. Mulroy since 1999 and has years of experience negotiating national and international Colorado River issues. He understands water law and the agencies' operational and supply challenges.

Mr. Brown, on the other hand, has been one of the valley's finest elected officials, a budget watchdog and student of policy on both the Las Vegas City Council and County Commission. But if he covets a high-level public-sector job — any high-level job — he should resign his office, or let his term expire, and compete for the job as a private citizen, not a politician.

If Mr. Entsminger and Mr. Brown applied for any other water agency job outside Nevada, Mr. Entsminger would be a front-runner and Mr. Brown wouldn't be seriously considered. Southern Nevadans deserve a better choice.

All of this behind-closed-doors negotiating needs to be brought into the sunshine. These are public agencies. Tuesday should be the start of a public hiring process, not the end of it.

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Colorado River Drought Forces a Painful Reckoning for States

By [MICHAEL WINES](#) JAN. 5, 2014

Inside



Launch media viewer

To help the Colorado, federal authorities this year will for the first time reduce the water flow into Lake Mead, the nation's largest reservoir, created by Hoover Dam. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

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LAKE MEAD, Nev. — The sinuous Colorado River and its slew of man-made reservoirs from the Rockies to southern Arizona are being sapped by 14 years of drought nearly unrivaled in 1,250 years.

The once broad and blue river has in many places dwindled to a murky brown trickle. Reservoirs have shrunk to less than half their capacities, the canyon walls around them ringed with white mineral deposits where water once lapped. Seeking to stretch their allotments of the river, regional water agencies are recycling sewage effluent, offering rebates to tear up grass lawns and subsidizing less thirsty appliances from dishwashers to shower heads.

But many experts believe the current drought is only the harbinger of a new, drier era in which the Colorado's flow will be substantially and permanently diminished

Faced with the shortage, federal authorities this year will for the first time decrease the amount of water that flows into Lake Mead, the nation's largest reservoir, from Lake Powell 180 miles upstream. That will reduce even more the level of Lake Mead, a crucial source of water for cities from Las Vegas to Los Angeles and for millions of acres of farmland.



[Launch media viewer](#)

A connector will link the existing water infrastructure to a tunnel being built under Lake Mead. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

Reclamation officials say there is a 50-50 chance that by 2015, Lake Mead's water will be rationed to states downstream. That, too, has never happened before.

“If Lake Mead goes below elevation 1,000” — 1,000 feet above sea level — “we lose any capacity to pump water to serve the municipal needs of seven in 10 people in the state of Nevada,” said John Entsminger, the senior deputy general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Since 2008, Mr. Entsminger’s agency has been drilling an \$817 million tunnel under Lake Mead — a third attempt to capture more water as two higher tunnels have become threatened by the lake’s falling level. In September, faced with the prospect that one of the tunnels could run dry before the third one was completed, the authority took emergency measures: still another tunnel, this one to stretch the life of the most threatened intake until construction of the third one is finished.

These new realities are forcing a profound reassessment of how the 1,450-mile Colorado, the Southwest’s only major river, can continue to slake the thirst of one of the nation’s fastest-growing regions. Agriculture, from California’s Imperial Valley to Wyoming’s cattle herds, soaks up about three-quarters of its water, and produces 15 percent of the nation’s food. But 40 million people also depend on the river and its tributaries, and their numbers are rising rapidly.

The labyrinthine rules by which the seven Colorado states share the river’s water are rife with potential points of conflict. And while some states have made huge strides in conserving water — and even reducing the amount they consume — they have yet to chart a united path through shortages that could last years or even decades.

“There is no planning for a continuation of the drought we’ve had,” said one expert on the Colorado’s woes, who asked not to be identified to preserve his relationship with state officials. “There’s always been within the current planning an embedded hope that somehow, things would return to something more like normal.”

Unfortunately, the Colorado during most of Lake Mead’s 78-year history was not normal at all.

Studies now show that the 20th century was one of the three wettest of the last 13 centuries in the Colorado basin. On average, the Colorado’s flow over that period was actually 15 percent lower than in the 1900s. And most experts agree that the basin will get even drier: [A brace of global-warming studies](#) concludes that rising temperatures will reduce the Colorado’s average flow after 2050 by five to 35 percent, even if rainfall remains the same — and most of those studies predict that rains will diminish.

Already, the drought is upending many of the assumptions on which water barons relied when they tamed the Colorado in the 1900s.

The Colorado basin states tried in the 1920s to stave off future fights over water by splitting it, 50-50, between the upper-basin states of Utah, New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming and the lower-basin states of Arizona, Nevada and California.

In fact, the deal underestimated how much water the fast-growing lower-basin states would need. During most of the wet 20th century, however, the river usually produced more than enough water to offset any shortage.

Now, the gap between need and supply is becoming untenable.

Lake Mead currently stands about 1,106 feet above sea level, and is expected to drop 20 feet in 2014. A continued decline would introduce a new set of problems: At 1,075 feet, rationing begins; at 1,050 feet, a more drastic rationing regime kicks in, and the uppermost water intake for Las Vegas shuts down. At 1,025 feet, rationing grows more draconian; at 1,000 feet, a second Las Vegas intake runs dry.

Lake Powell is another story. There, a 100-foot drop would shut down generators that supply enough electricity to power 350,000 homes.

The federal Bureau of Reclamation's 24-month forecasts of water levels at Powell and Mead do not contemplate such steep declines. But neither did they foresee the current drought.

"We can't depend on history to project the future anymore," Carly Jerla, a geological hydrologist and the reclamation bureau's Colorado River expert, said in an interview. The drought could end tomorrow, she said — or it could drag on for seven more years.

That raises questions that the states are just beginning to sort out.

The river's upper-basin states are worried that they might have to curb their consumption to meet their obligations downstream. But the thorniest problems are in the lower basin, where a thicket of political and legal deals has left Arizona holding the bag should the Colorado River continue to diminish.

In the 1960s, California's legislators demanded first dibs on lower-basin water as a condition of supporting federal legislation to build the [Central Arizona Project](#), a vast web of canals irrigating that state's farms and cities. Should rationing begin in 2015, Arizona would sacrifice a comparatively small fraction of its Colorado River allotment, while California's supply would remain intact.

Painful as that would be, though, it could get worse: Should Mead continue to fall, Arizona would lose more than half of its Colorado River water before California lost so much as a drop.

That would have a cascading effect. The Central Arizona Project would lose revenue it gets from selling water, which would raise the price of water to remaining customers, leading farmers to return to pumping groundwater for irrigation — exactly what the Central Arizona Project was supposed to prevent.

"By going back to the pumps, you'll have made the decision that agriculture will no longer be an industry in central Arizona," David Modeer, the project's general manager, said in an interview.

Even Californians doubt Arizona would stand for that, but no successor to the 1960s agreement is in place. And California has a vital interest in holding on to its full allotment of water. The Southern California region using Colorado water is expected to add six million people to the existing 19 million in the next 45 years, and its other water source — the Sierra Nevada to the north — is suffering the same drought and climate problems as the Colorado basin.

“The basic blueprint of our plan calls for a reliable foundation that we then build upon, and that reliable foundation is the Colorado River and Northern California water,” said Jeffrey Kightlinger, the general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. “To the extent we lose one of those supplies, I don’t know that there is enough technology and new supplies to replace them.”

Advertising

There may be ways to live with a permanently drier Colorado, but none of them are easy. Finding more water is possible — San Diego is already building a desalination plant on the Pacific shore — but there are too few sources to make a serious dent in a shortage.

That leaves conservation, a tack the lower-basin states already are pursuing. Arizona farmers reduce runoff, for example, [by using laser technology to ensure that their fields are table flat](#). The state consumes essentially as much water today as in 1955, even as its population has grown nearly twelvefold.

[Working to reduce water consumption](#) by 20 percent per person from 2010 to 2020, Southern California’s Metropolitan Water District is recycling sewage effluent, giving away high-efficiency water nozzles and subsidizing items like artificial turf and zero-water urinals.

Southern Nevada’s water-saving measures are in some ways most impressive of all: Virtually all water used indoors, from home dishwashers to the toilets and bathtubs used by the 40 million tourists who visit Las Vegas each year, is treated and returned to Lake Mead. Officials here boast that everyone could take a 20-minute shower every day without increasing the city’s water consumption by a drop.

Moreover, an intensive conservation program slashed the region’s water consumption from 2002 to 2012, even as the area added 400,000 residents.

Even after those measures, federal officials say, much greater conservation is possible. Local officials say they have little choice.

“The era of big water transfers is either over, or it’s rapidly coming to an end,” said Mr. Entsminger, the southern Nevada water official. “It sure looks like in the 21st century, we’re all going to have to use less water.”

[print](#)

Cold temperatures keep snow in Sparks

by [Garrett E. Valenzuela](#)

01.07.14 - 05:49 pm

Sparks residents may not have to worry about the below freezing temperatures happening in the mid-western and southern United States, but icy and slick conditions still exist in the Rail City. Fortunately, the small amount of snow and ice that remains in the city lies in the shaded areas, usually on the north side of homes, buildings and other structures.

City of Sparks road crews have not had an issue with any snow refusing to melt from various spots on city streets or sidewalks, and City of Sparks Community Relations Manager Adam Mayberry said Tuesday the high-desert city is not accustomed to having snow remain on the streets once major storms have come and gone.

"City crews will certainly respond on a case by case (basis) to heavy traffic (pedestrian and vehicle) areas)to make an effort to lessen the ice," Mayberry said via email Tuesday, "But at the end of the day, there is only so much that sand and salt and other elements can do to get rid of the ice during these kinds of temperatures."

Mayberry said home and business owners are responsible for plowing and removing snow in front of their properties, while the city takes care of local parks and other public areas. Mayberry said Sparks residents play an important role in keeping their neighborhoods safe during freezing weather conditions.

"We always remind our residents to look out after their disabled or elderly neighbors and remove snow and ice, and apply some of their own salt to those high-use areas," Mayberry said.

The Nevada Department of Transportation has noticed a few areas of major highways and freeways where snow may melt during the day but freezes overnight causing icy areas. Public Information Officer Scott Magruder said Tuesday very few motorists have notified NDOT of problems with leftover snow, however he said early morning and late-night commutes should be done with caution.

"I think local streets have those (shaded, snowy) areas more than the roads we oversee, but anyone driving around town should be cautious because those areas often are in neighborhoods and unfamiliar areas," he said. "For us, we try to clear the remaining snow on the sides of the roadways, and if we can, we will go out and sand those areas and layer it so there is some traction. In a worst-case scenario we would put up a sign so people are aware, but nothing like that has needed to be done."

Magruder said many northern Nevadans understand that the freezing temperatures will bring slick conditions, but he said it never hurts to remind

pedestrians and motorists that until the region really warms up to be aware of icy roads.

"Basically, it comes down to people being aware of it," Magruder said. "It is good to remind people that just because the sun is out a little more often than during those storms in December, it doesn't mean we are clear of all weather-related hazards."

Local neighborhoods are also home to shaded areas that cause packed snow and ice to accumulate, which can pose a threat to homeowners who have not properly 'winterized' their homes. Brent Smith, coordinator of field and meter services for Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA), said the number of calls coming in about frozen or burst pipes has significantly declined in recent weeks, but he said homeowners should note any ice around their homes near major pipes.

"The shady sides of your house are usually OK, but north-facing walls enclosing bathrooms and pipes need more attention," Smith said. "We recommend keeping the temperature a little higher, at least 55 degrees, in the house or those north-facing rooms to prevent any freezing in the pipes."

Smith said TMWA does not promote wasting water, but in some cases leaving a faucet on a slow drip can keep enough flow in the water line to prevent freezing during absence. However, preparing indoor and outdoor water pipes for winter trumps any solution when it comes to freezing temperatures, which is why TMWA offers its free irrigation winterization workshop each year.

"We really want to help people keep their homes from flooding or broken pipes," Smith said. "Some people are unfamiliar with the process and it can be costly to have a plumber do it. We have the hands-on tools to help people better understand their irrigation systems and, in that way, we can help them understand how to handle an emergency in their home during the coldest parts of winter."

Sparks residents can contact the City of Sparks at 353-5555 to report any snow on local streets that needs removal. More information about winterizing your irrigation system and home water pipes can be found at tmwa.com/conservation/winterize.

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Margaret Moran
mmoran@sierrasun.com
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Tahoe officials urge water conservation amid worsening dry spell

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A couple walks Monday afternoon along the shore of Lake Tahoe at Kings Beach, where lightly snow-covered peaks can be seen in the distance. Lack of snow this winter in conjunction with the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons is raising concerns about state water levels.

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WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

- Pick native, drought-tolerant plants and trees for the yard.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers.
- Check and fix water leaks.
- Run the dishwasher and washing machine with only full loads.
- Turn water off while brushing teeth or shaving.
- Take shorter showers — five minutes or less.

— Replace home appliances such as old toilets and washing machines with energy efficient models.

*Source: Tahoe City and Truckee Donner public utility districts.

TAHOE CITY, Calif. — With 2013 being the driest calendar year locally on record and 2014 getting off to a similar start, Tahoe officials are encouraging water conservation.

“Every gallon a customer conserves will help preserve the necessary water resources available during a drought situation,” said Tony Lalotis, director of utilities for the Tahoe City Public Utility District. “Conserving water in the winter is just as important as conserving in the summer.”

His recommendation comes days after the first 2014 Sierra snowpack survey near Echo Summit found 9.3 inches of snow depth, with 2.3 inches of snow water content, about 20 percent of the long-term average.

“Snowpack directly correlates to water supply, so I think it’s very important,” explained Steven Poncelet, public information and conservation manager for Truckee Donner Public Utility District.

While the Truckee PUD hasn’t seen an impact on its water levels due to prolonged dry conditions, Lalotis said the Tahoe City PUD is starting to see the effects.

In general, TCPUD water sources are a few feet below normal levels for this time of year. It’s a concern, Lalotis said, but not at a critical level.

“We are confident with customers conserving water, and the district’s internal leak detection and correcting program, water supplies will not reach critical status this summer even if the drought conditions continue,” he said.

More than 90 percent of TCPUD’s water comes from groundwater wells drilled deep into underground aquifers, with rain and snowmelt being the main replenishers, he said.

“Where as an aquifer has some (storage) in it, a river really doesn’t” said Poncelet, adding that the Truckee PUD is strictly a groundwater agency. “It’s either getting fed or it’s not.”

For that reason, those who rely on surface water sources such as rivers and lakes are more closely tied to yearly precipitation fluctuations than those who rely on groundwater, he said.

“Because we rely on just a few big winter storms in December, January and February to build our snowpack and refill our reservoirs and groundwater basins, there is still some potential for relief,” said John Laird, California Secretary for Natural Resources, in a statement.

According to the National Weather Service's extended forecast Tuesday afternoon for Truckee/Tahoe, there is a "slight chance" of snow Wednesday and Thursday night. There also is a chance of showers Saturday.

"One giant storm can turn it around," Poncelet said.

In the meantime, Laird is calling for residents to curb water use while state officials — as directed by Gov. Jerry Brown — meet regularly to monitor conditions and assess whether a drought declaration is needed.

On March 30, 2011, Brown declared the official end of the state's drought following the 2010-11 winter. The drought declaration was made by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in February 2009 after three relatively dry winters.

"The lack of precipitation in the last three seasons is an unfortunate reminder that water is a limited resource, and that water conservation is a critical factor to preserving its availability," Laliotis said. "Water conservation should be a 24/7/365 reality for all of our customers and not just limited to drought years."

01/08/14 **Water Supply Update**

FOX 11 News (Bill Hauck did an interview about water supply conditions, Chad Blanchard also interviewed. It played last night at 10 p.m. Don't see it posted yet.)
FYI: The parent company to FOX 11 and 21 has bought out Sunbelt Communications, owner of KRNV, Ch 4. They are combining staff, but at this time, news reports will be separately produced.

Chemical levels in West Virginia water drop, but still no end in sight to ban

By **Greg Botelho** and **Tom Watkins**, CNN
updated 12:00 AM EST, Sat January 11, 2014

(CNN) -- The level of odorous chemical in West Virginians' water dropped Friday, but not enough for authorities to lift a warning to avoid drinking, cooking or bathing with it or to give a clear idea as to when things will change.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin described the situation in nine counties Friday night as "pretty bad," both for residents being told the only thing they should do with their running water is flush their toilets and schools, restaurants, hotels and other businesses forced to close.

One bit of good news is tests on the affected water supply, which are being conducted on an hourly basis, show "the chemical level is declining."

"But we're just not sure exactly how long it's going to take before it's acceptable to lift the do-not-drink ban," the governor told CNN.

Much of the anger centers around the coal-industry company from which the chemical leak occurred.

And there's also frustration among some -- including Danny Jones, the mayor of West Virginia's most populated city and capital, Charleston -- that the water company trying to deal with the resulting mess still doesn't have a timeline for when things will return to normal.

"It's caused us more problems than you could ever imagine," Jones said Friday night, pointing out people can't do things like wash their hands after going to bathroom or wash their clothes.

"... It's a prison from which we would like to be released."

Utility official on water: 'I can't say it is safe'

The crisis began Thursday, when residents of Kanawha County reported a foul odor -- similar to licorice -- in the air.

The Kanawha County Fire Department and the state Department of Environmental Protection that day traced that smell to a leak from a 35,000-gallon storage tank along the Elk River.

The chemical had overflowed a containment area around the tank run by Freedom Industries, then migrated over land and through the soil into the river. The leak happened about a mile upriver from the impacted West Virginia American Water Co. plant.

After concluding the tap water was contaminated late Thursday afternoon, a stop-use warning went out to customers in Boone, Cabell, Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Putnam and Roane counties.

West Virginia American Water's president Jeff McIntyre said Friday he didn't believe the substance -- 4-methylcyclohexane methanol -- was still flowing. But that doesn't mean the situation will be resolved soon.

What is 4-methylcyclohexane methanol?

"It is not intended to be in the water (or) distribution system," McIntyre said. "... Once it's in there, there's no more treatment for it."

While there haven't been reported widespread sicknesses, the ordeal is having a big impact. Kanawha County Commission president Kent Carper told reporters Friday more than 300,000 people have been affected. Tomblin gave a lower estimate -- saying it was "way over 100,000 (but) we don't have an exact number yet of people ... without water."

Businesses -- including 15 McDonald's in the area, according to their ownership group -- have shut down. Hospitals have taken emergency measures to conserve water. And residents have been scrambling, as evidenced by empty shelves and worries at home.

"It's all very hectic," said Patricia Pearl of Charleston. "You don't even want to go to the grocery store. I think everyone is in a panic."

Emergency rooms busy, businesses closed

The emergency's ripple effects included the closure Friday of the state Supreme Court of Appeals in Charleston, courts in Boone and Lincoln counties, and the cancellation of classes at West Virginia State University.

In addition to shuttering her shop Flowers & More on Friday -- usually her busiest day -- Pearl noted other ripple effects, like how her 60-year-old husband's physical therapy session tied to a recent knee surgery was canceled.

"The problem is that no one seems to know when we'll have the water restored," she said. First responders and hospitals saw a rush of activity after the alert went out. Carper said more than 1,000 calls were placed in four or five hours to the 911 center, 24 of them for emergency medical services -- five of which led to people being taken to hospitals.

Water company spokeswoman Laura Jordan urged people to get medical attention "if they are feeling something ... isn't right."

Many -- perhaps too many -- did just that.

"Our emergency rooms have been very busy with individuals unnecessarily concerned and presenting no symptoms," said Charleston Area Medical Center.

The restrictions affected the hospital in other ways, too. It put into place linen conservation and alternative cleaning methods and turned away all but emergency patients.

Daniel Stewart sued the water utility and Freedom Industries, saying his kidney transplant surgery was canceled because of the ordeal "forcing (him) to undergo dialysis, pain and suffering and continued illness due to his renal failure and other medical damages."

West Virginia American Water "failed to maintain an appropriate emergency response plan," Stewart claimed, while Freedom "failed to properly maintain and store its chemicals."

A lawsuit was filed Friday by a man whose scheduled kidney transplant was canceled due to the water issue, said attorney Jesse Forbes said.

CNN reached out to the water company about the lawsuit.

"West Virginia American Water is not focused on litigation at this time. Our focus is on our customers and providing safe adequate water supplies," the company said in a statement.

Leaked chemical used to wash coal

Freedom Industries is feeling the heat from others as well.

President Gary Southern tried several times to walk away from a press conference Friday evening, saying "it has been an extremely long day," only to be called back by insistent reporters -- including

one who noted how long a day it has been for all the West Virginians now without drinkable water or a full explanation as to why.

"This incident is extremely unfortunate and unanticipated," Southern said. "... This has been a very, very taxing process."

Freedom's crippled steel tank is about a mile upriver from the West Virginia American Water plant, according to McIntyre. According to Carper, the county official, it's part of a former Pennzoil refinery dating back to the 1930s or 1940s. Jones, Charleston's mayor, said he believes "the chemicals went through (holes in a retaining) wall."

Southern said two Freedom employees noticed material leaking from a storage tank into a dyke around 10:30 a.m. Thursday. They contacted authorities and began the cleanup process -- including hauling away the chemical still in the tank and vacuuming up some in the nearby ground.

"We have mitigated the risk, we believe, in terms of further material leaving this facility," said the head of Freedom, which supplies products for the coal-mining industry.

Southern said he couldn't say how much of 4-methylcyclohexane methanol -- which United Mine Workers spokesman Phil Smith explained is used to wash coal before it goes to market -- leaked, only that it was under 35,000 gallons. Tomblin said a maximum of 5,000 gallons of the chemical seeped out.

The Freedom Industries president downplayed the chemical's health effects, saying it has "very, very low toxicity" and opining it poses no danger to the public.

West Virginia American Water and government officials have a different take, as evidenced by the stop-use warning.

As McIntyre said, "We don't know that the water is not safe, but I can't say it is safe."

The federal Environmental Protection Agency -- which doesn't yet have an "official role" in the response -- has taken no enforcement actions against Freedom Industries during the past five years, agency spokeswoman Alisha Johnson said.

West Virginia's Department of Environmental Protection ordered Freedom to take everything out of its 11 remaining above-ground storage tanks. This came hours after the department issued a "cease operations order" for the company, saying it could not receive any additional material until it addresses the effects of the leak and proves its structures are sound.

'I do not know how long this will last'



'Can't say' water's safe in West Va.



West Virginia's governor declared a state of emergency in nine counties.

The rush now is on to fully assess and address the problem, and perhaps press criminal charges because of it.

Having declared a state of emergency affecting the nine involved counties, Tomblin urged West Virginians to look out for one another -- especially small children and the elderly.

To that point, he announced a "call to action drive" through Friday evening at the State Capitol to collect items such as bottled water, sanitizer, liquid baby formula, paper and plastic plates and utensils for those in need. This is in addition to water stations set up in malls, churches, high schools, recreation centers and fire departments.

The federal government has gotten involved as well, with President Barack Obama signed an emergency declaration authorizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster relief efforts.

FEMA said Friday that it was sending 75 trucks -- each carrying about 4,900 gallons of water -- to the area. Tomblin said this federal help -- for now, mostly in the form of cases of bottled water -- is helpful, as are the contributions from many donating businesses.

U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin said he and other federal authorities is looking into what happened, telling CNN Friday that "even a negligent release of this kind could be a criminal violation."

"It's really too early to tell whether criminal charges could be brought" against Freedom, he said Friday. "... We're going to want to figure out just exactly what occurred and when ... But right now, obviously, what we're trying to do is get people's water back on."

Meanwhile, West Virginia American Water is working intently as well, including teaming with DuPont and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine the contamination level. Jordan said the system would be flushed and may be returned to service in zones, but she would not speculate when that might occur.

The water company also has provided 12 tanker trucks filled with water, and bought four tractor-trailer loads of bottled water for distribution to those in need, McIntyre said.

Tomblin noted that "there is no shortage of bottled water," but urged people to see a doctor immediately if they come down with nausea, dizziness, or eye or skin irritation. And he didn't make any promises as to when this emergency would end.

"I do not know how long this will last," the governor said.

CNN's AnneClaire Stapleton, Mike Ahlers, Paul Caron, Ashley Fantz, Ed Payne, Marlina Baldacci, Kevin Conlon, Susan Candiotti and Dave Alsop contributed to this report.

Thousands warned not to drink water after W. Va. Spill State, feds declare a state of emergency as out-of-state water is trucked in.

West Virginia National Guard troops distributed bottled water from Maryland on Friday after a chemical spill in the Elk River in Charleston contaminated the water supply for as many as 300,000 people in nine counties.

The federal government on Friday joined the state in declaring a state of emergency for much of the southwest section of the state.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin urged water customers in the southwest counties of Kanawha, Putnam, Jackson, Clay, Lincoln, Logan, Roane and Boone counties, as well as customers in the area of Culloden in Cabell County, to stop using water for everything but flushing toilets and fighting fires.

"Do not drink it. Do not cook with it. Do not wash clothes in it. Do not take a bath in it," Tomblin warned. "For safety, we would ask everyone -- this includes restaurants, hospitals, any institutions out there -- please do not use any tap water if you're a customer of West Virginia American Water."

Schools were also closed in five counties.

The emergency triggered a run on stores selling bottled water, including a Sam's Club that sold its 4,200 cases of water in an hour and a half, *The Charleston Daily Mail* reports. Store employees said they were unable to find any more water at stores in a 20-mile radius.

The sheriff's office in Kanawha county reported receiving about a dozen 911 calls after scuffles broke out over rapidly dwindling supplies. *The Charleston Gazette* reports. Police were asked to step up patrols around convenience stores.

The spill occurred on Thursday when a foaming agent used in the coal preparation process leaked from a tank at Freedom Industries and overran a containment area in the capital.



Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin pauses in the House of Delegates Chamber during the state of the state Wednesday evening. (Photo: AP/Robert M. Wojcieszak, *The Daily Mail*)

Shortly afterward the chemical poured into the Elk River and a nearby treatment plant as the smell enveloped parts of Charleston.

The state Department of Environmental Protection's air-quality officials discovered the spill -- which the company had not self-reported, the *Gazette* reported.

The chemical's odor -- similar to licorice or cough syrup — was especially strong at the Charleston Marriott hotel a few blocks from the Elk River, which flows into the Kanawha River in downtown Charleston. The Marriott shut off all water to rooms, and then turned it back on so guests could flush toilets. Each guest was given two 16.9-ounce bottles of spring water upon returning to the hotel.

Officials from Freedom, a manufacturer of chemicals for the mining, steel, and cement industries, hadn't commented since the spill, but a woman who answered the phone at the company said it would issue a statement later Friday, the Associated Press reports.

The head of the state Air National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing said 51 tractor-trailers loaded with water were sent to West Virginia from a Federal Emergency Management Agency facility in Maryland, the *Gazette* reports. A C-130 cargo aircraft was sent to Martinsburg to pick up the water.

Some officials said the orders against drinking water from the tap were issued as a precaution, as they were still not sure exactly what hazard the spill posed to residents. It also was not immediately clear how much of the chemical spilled into the river and at what concentration.

"I don't know if the water is not safe," water company president Jeff McIntyre said. "Until we get out and flush the actual system and do more testing, we can't say how long this (advisory) will last at this time."

McIntyre said the chemical -- 4-methylcyclohexane methanol -- isn't lethal in its strongest form.

According to a fact sheet from Fisher Scientific, the chemical is harmful if swallowed — and could be so if inhaled — and causes eye and skin irritation.

The governor's warning about water use included restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes and other establishments that use tap water.

Early Friday, Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety spokesman Lawrence Messina said he wasn't aware of any hospitals closing and that area medical centers "seemed to have adequate water supply, at least for the short term."

At the Little India restaurant in Charleston, about 12 customers were asked to leave when bar manager Bill LaCourse learned about the shutdown notice.

Karlee Bolen, 16, of Charleston, said her family, including her parents, two sisters and brother, were considering the possibility of heading to her grandmother's home in Braxton County, where tap water was unaffected, an hour to the northeast.

"I kind of want to shower and brush my teeth," she said.

Contributing: Associated Press



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W.Va. gov declares emergency after chemical spill

Posted: Jan 09, 2014 3:40 PM PST
Updated: Jan 09, 2014 7:11 PM PST

By JOHN RABY
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) - At least 100,000 customers in nine West Virginia counties were told not to drink, bathe, cook or wash clothes using their tap water because of a chemical spill into the Elk River in Charleston, with Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin declaring a state of emergency Thursday for all those areas.

The chemical, a foaming agent used in the coal preparation process, leaked from a tank at Freedom Industries, overran a containment area and went into the river earlier Thursday. The amount that spilled wasn't immediately known, but West Virginia American Water has a treatment plant nearby and it is the company's customers who are affected.

"The water has been contaminated," said Tomblin, who didn't know how long the emergency declaration would last.

Officials, though, said they aren't sure what hazard the spill poses to humans and that there were no immediate reports of people getting sick. It also was not immediately clear how much spilled into the river and in what concentration.

"I don't know if the water is not safe," said water company president Jeff McIntyre.

Tomblin said he's asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist the state with supplies of bottled water. But people weren't waiting.

Once word got out about the governor's declaration, customers stripped store shelves in many areas of items such as bottled water, paper cups and bowls.

As many as 50 customers had lined up to buy water at a convenience store near the state Capitol in Charleston.

"It was chaos, that's what it was," cashier Danny Cardwell said.

The don't-drink-the-water declaration involves customers in the counties of Kanawha, Boone, Cabell, Clay, Jackson, Lincoln, Logan, Putnam and Roane. Most of the counties surround the capital city of Charleston, where there was a chemical smell similar to licorice in the air both outdoors and in areas where it had already reached the water supply on Thursday night.

West Virginia lawmakers who just started their session this week won't conduct business on Friday because of the problem and State Department of Education spokeswoman Liza Cordeiro said schools in at least five of the counties will be closed. Many students already missed some time this week because of the frigid weather.

McIntyre said the advisory was issued "because we don't know. I don't have anything to indicate the water is not safe. It's an abundance of caution that we're taking this step. We don't do this lightly, tell our customers not to use the water."

McIntyre said testing is being conducted to determine the concentrations of the chemical that have gone through the water system. But he said the chemical was in a much weaker concentration when it reached the water treatment plant through the river.

"Until we get out and flush the actual system and do more testing, we can't say how long this (advisory) will last at this time," McIntyre said. When the advisory was first issued for five counties, that as many as 100,000 customers were affected. The company has 170,000 customers in 17 West Virginia counties, as well as in Ohio and Virginia.

Freedom Industries did not immediately respond for comment. The Elk River flows into the Kanawha River in downtown Charleston. The Kanawha eventually flows into the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, about 55 miles to the northwest.

Senate Majority Leader John Unger, D-Martinsburg, said all committee meetings have been canceled and lawmakers will adjourn until at least Monday. Other government offices also will be closed.

Unger, who co-chairs the Joint Legislative Oversight Commission on State Water Resources, said dozens of miles of pipe are affected by the spill.

Bradenton Herald

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Correction: Lake Tahoe-Fireworks Lawsuit story

By SCOTT SONNER

The Associated Press January 12, 2014 Updated 1 hour ago

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In this July 2007 photo, fireworks exploding over Lake Tahoe are seen from Heavenly Mountain Resort. A federal lawsuit accusing the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority of polluting the alpine lake with debris from Fourth of July and Labor Day fireworks says the authority and its contractor should be subject to up to \$75 million in fines for thousands of violations of the Clean Water Act over the past five years. THE TAHOE DAILY TRIBUNE, JONAH M. KESSEL — AP Photo



A corrected version of the story is below:

Suit: Lake Tahoe fireworks violate Clean Water Act

Suit says fireworks pollution at Lake Tahoe could be subject to \$75M in Clean Water Act fines

By SCOTT SONNER

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — A federal lawsuit accusing the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority of polluting the alpine lake with debris from Fourth of July and Labor Day fireworks says the tourism agency and its contractor should be subject to up to \$75 million in fines.

Joseph and Joan Truxler of Zephyr Cove, Nev., on the lake's southeast shore, insist their suit is not intended to halt the spectacular, boat-launched displays that have wowed tens of thousands of visitors for three decades.

But they're frustrated by what they say is the authority's indifference — and state and U.S. regulators' failure — to protect the cobalt blue lake from the debris and chemical pollutants.

"The inaction on their part is what has triggered all this," Joan Truxler told The Associated Press.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Sacramento in November alleges that thousands of violations of the Clean Water Act were committed over five years.

Judge Troy Nunley agreed last week to extend until Feb. 10 the deadline for the authority and Pyro Spectaculars North Inc. to respond to the suit.

Both are accused of discharging trash, debris, munitions and chemical residues — including perchlorate, nitrate and sulfur — into the lake twice a year for at least the last five years.

The lawsuit says that they failed to obtain the necessary discharge permit in violation of the federal act and are violating California and Nevada state water quality standards strictly prohibiting debris on the lake, which is famous for its clear waters.

Pyro Spectaculars of Rialto, Calif., has produced large-scale pyrotechnic displays for Super Bowls, Olympics, Disneyland, the Statue of Liberty and Golden Gate Bridge since it was founded in 1979.

Crews begin to clear the surface of the lake soon after the show and divers are sent below to retrieve visible debris from the lake bed, but the lawsuit contends those efforts are ineffective.

Michael Lozeau, an Oakland, Calif.-based attorney for the Truxlers, notified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state regulators in September of their intent to sue.

The Truxlers have watched the fireworks since they started vacationing at Tahoe in 1972. They bought a condo in 1999 and moved there year-round in 2006.

"I thought what everyone else thought: You mean it doesn't just disintegrate in the air and go away," Joan Truxler said.

She started gathering paper, plastic and cardboard tubes — some with Pyro's label — on Pinewild Beach in Marla Bay on July 5 after her 2-year-old grandson held up a fireworks fuse and said, "Look, Grandma."

"It was alarming," she said, especially after fire officials had warned that washed-up, unexploded fireworks could pose a danger if they dried out. By Aug. 23, she'd collected enough debris to cover a 60-square-foot surface, she says.

More than 200 mortars launch rockets and fireworks at each holiday show, the lawsuit says. It argues each discharge is a separate violation of the act punishable by up to a \$37,500 fine — a total of more than 2,000 violations during the 10 shows subject to \$75 million in fines.

It argues alternatively that if each mortar tube doesn't qualify as a discharge point source — rather the individual boats are the source — there still were at least 27 violations punishable by up to \$1.1 million in fines.

Carol Chaplin, the authority's executive director, can't picture a Fourth at the lake without fireworks.

"We've been shooting them off for 30 years and this is the first time there has been a complaint," she said. "It's an iconic event. It has a huge economic impact for the region."

EPA spokeswoman Margot Perez-Sullivan said the agency doesn't comment on pending litigation. She said states are responsible for all permitting.

Lawyers for the authority and the contractor said they routinely secure the only permits required from the U.S. Coast Guard and the local fire department. State regulators won't comment on the suit, but Nevada Division of Environmental spokeswoman JoAnn Kittrell agrees no state water permit is required.

Kara Thiel, a lawyer for the LTVA, said the suit attempts to exploit a law "intended to discourage pollutant discharge concealed from regulatory oversight."

"It is inconceivable LTVA and Pyro would fall into this category," she said.

Truxler said most neighbors are supportive of their effort, but she also hears of criticism.

"I can't blame other people for feeling that way," she said. "They are nervous the fireworks might be canceled, but that is not our goal. We want better oversight."

"It's about the bigger picture — the health of the lake and its clarity, and how much of that stuff is sitting at the bottom of the lake."

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Today's Circulars





West Virginia Chemical Spill: Water Is Now Safe to Drink

Massive Chemical Spill Left 300,000 People Without Tap Water

By ALYSSA NEWCOMB

Jan. 13, 2014—

After five days forsaking showers and brushing their teeth with bottled water, an estimated 300,000 residents around Charleston, W.V., will once again have access to safe tap water.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin said today a "do not use" order is being lifted in zones after extensive testing deemed the water safe to drink.

Officials said the ban was being lifted in a "strict, methodical manner" to ensure the water system isn't overwhelmed with demand. Customers are also being advised by West Virginia American Water to flush out their pipes before using tap water again.

For Sean McCormick, an attorney who lives in downtown Charleston, the first area that has been given the go-ahead to use tap water again, the good news means he'll finally get something he said he'd previously taken for granted -- a shower.

"I've had one shower since Thursday, which is tough," McCormick, 25, told ABCNews.com.

"Brushing your teeth is a pain," he said. "You really don't realize how great it is to have running water every day until you don't have it."

Over the weekend, FEMA handed out more than 2 million liters of fresh water, while residents said many grocery store shelves remained stocked with bottles of water for purchase.

West Virginia's water woes began on Thursday when thousands of gallons of a licorice-smelling chemical used to process coal leaked into the Elk River, prompting the West Virginia American Water Company to issue a "do not use" order.

The licorice smell has been lingering around town, even inside McCormick's apartment since Thursday, he said.

"It's not a bad smell. It doesn't stink. In certain parts of downtown right by the river, you can really smell it," he said. "I could smell it in my apartment Thursday night and Friday just from flushing the toilet."

As West Virginians cope with the hardship, Erin Brockovich, who in 1993 led a multimillion-dollar groundwater contamination case against Pacific Gas and Electric Co., has arrived in Charleston to help answer questions.

The environmental activist said she had received more than 3,500 letters and emails from people with questions and concerns about water safety.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board said it has sent an investigative team to the site of the spill to determine a cause.

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Sierra Sun

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January 21, 2014

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My Turn: Truckee is number one

Truckee is the nation's first municipality to pass an aquatic invasive species ordinance. Why? Although most municipalities have rivers that run through them and many have lakes that are potential sites for AIS, few have the scientific capability to evaluate non-native species or the money to prevent them.

Truckee doesn't have scientists to evaluate potential AIS in Donner Lake or the Truckee River, which passes through seven miles of town. And it doesn't have the money to operate AIS prevention and control programs.

How then did my town end up with the distinction of becoming North America's first municipality to have a mandatory boat inspection program? Easy: we incorporated faulty TRPA science and use unsuspecting Reno water customers' money.

Since 2009, Reno's water utility, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) has funded more than \$1 million for voluntary boat inspections in Donner Lake. Ron Penrose, a TMWA engineer who manages his company's funding of the Truckee program, justifies underwriting Donner Lake boat inspections by saying that Reno doesn't want to suffer the tens of millions of dollars of damages that quagga mussels have caused in Las Vegas.

Penrose is wrong about quagga's ability to survive in Donner Lake and about the cost of controlling the nation's worst quagga infestation. Las Vegas annually spends \$150,000 to keep their water system mussel-free — \$100,000 less per year than TMWA spends to keep mussels out of Donner Lake, where ironically, they can't survive because of the lake's exceptionally low calcium.

Why then did Truckee town staff tell their town council that the program would only cost \$25,000 and would make money for the town? Because they only considered what boaters would pay and not TMWA's customers, who will underwrite more than 90 percent of the program's actual cost.

Some in Truckee took pride in codifying public policy they believe will protect Donner's native aquatic species. Never mind that there are no native species that are threatened, or non-native species to protect the lake from.

Donner's mackinaw, brown, and rainbow trout were introduced by wildlife services, and they killed off the Lahontan cutthroat trout, the lake's only native trout. And non-native crayfish and Asian clams were introduced by anglers as bait to catch the non-native trout.

The California State Water Project is an example of how complex AIS management is. The California Department of Water Resources manages the world's largest public power and water conveyance system: 34 storage facilities, 20 pumping plants, five hydroelectric power plants, and approximately 700 miles of canals and aqueducts.

SWP transports Sierra snowmelt from streams with calcium concentrations below 6 parts per million — half that necessary for quagga to survive — to Santa Barbara County where calcium is 15 times greater. SWP provides drinking water to 23 million people and irrigates 750,000 acres of farmland.

CDWR not only has its own scientists, but draws on the resources of the California Quagga and Zebra Mussel Interagency Team.

Still, CDWR retained RNT Consulting, the world's foremost private authority on quagga and zebra mussels, to formulate their plan.

CDWR determined of the 14 SWP lakes they have jurisdiction over and that allow boating, half have calcium concentrations "unsuitable for quagga and zebra mussels," and those lakes have no inspections. Seven lakes have dissolved calcium above 16 ppm and have mandatory inspections; Donner has calcium of 8 ppm and Tahoe's is 9 ppm.

Four laymen from the Tahoe Resource Conservation District and the Truckee River Watershed Council determined Donner Lake is at risk for AIS infestation. They are wrong, and their hubris is the foundation of an unnecessary program that ignores the Truckee River and Boca, Prosser, and Stampede reservoirs — but it's guaranteed to be successful, because no non-native species threatens Donner Lake.

Steve Urie is a Truckee resident.

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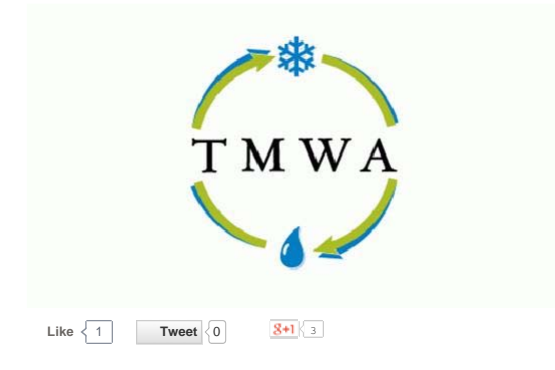


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TMWA consumer scam reported text size **A A A**

Updated: Tuesday, January 21 2014, 11:00 AM PST

RENO - Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) has learned that a person(s) identifying themselves as an employee of TMWA has called at least one customer, threatening to disconnect their water service unless a money order or cash payment was not made immediately. They asked that the customer call back with payment arrangements to the following number: 805-308-4820, ext-201.

While TMWA occasionally calls customers who are delinquent on their bills, payments are not solicited over the phone. The only methods of paying your water bill are listed at [Tmwa.com](#). The only phone number to pay over the phone is TMWA's main line 775-834-8080.

Customers are asked, if they receive an unsolicited call asking for a payment on their TMWA account, to take down the phone number, refuse to make a payment and call local law enforcement or TMWA at 775-834-8080.

In addition, TMWA requires employees to wear identification badges at all times. Anyone claiming to be TMWA employee is required to present a badge and employee number when contacting customers in the field.

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TMWA Warns of Phone Scam Involving Missed Payments

Posted: Jan 21, 2014

12:22 PM PST

*Updated: Jan 21,
2014 1:54 PM PST*

TMWA is warning its customers about a potential scam involving alleged missed service payments.

A TMWA representative says a person identifying themselves as an employee with the water company has called at least one customer threatening to disconnect their service if a money order or cash payment was not made immediately. They asked that the customer call back with payment arrangements to the following number: **805-308-4820 ext. 201**.

TMWA says while it occasionally calls customers who are delinquent on their bills, payments are not solicited over the phone. The only methods of paying your bill are listed at www.tmwa.com. And the only phone number to pay over the phone is TMWA's main line at 775-834-8080 option #1.

It says if you receive an unsolicited call asking for a payment on your TMWA account, you should take down the phone number, refuse to make a payment and call local law enforcement or TMWA at 775-834-8080. In addition, TMWA requires employees to wear identification badges at all times. Anyone claiming to be TMWA employee is required to present a badge and employee number when contacting customers in the field.

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QOTo4HoAZ_hy (http://www.kolotv.com/)

TMWA Warns Public of Scam Involving Threat to Disconnect Water Service

Updated: Tue 12:37 PM, Jan 21, 2014
By: Julie Warren Email (mailto:news@kolotv.com)

2526num% RENO, NV - The Truckee Meadows Water Authority is warning the public of a
253D0% scam that involves a person identifying themselves as a TMWA employee who
2526sig% threatens to disconnect a customer's water service.
253DAOD64_2UKWYN8f8qX0sbTPcgRDfsc5VcrQ%
2526client% According to an official with TMWA, a person called at least one customer claiming
253Dca to be an employee of TMWA.



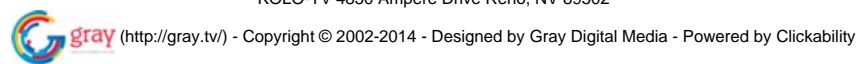
MGN Online

- The official says the person threatened to disconnect the customer's water service
pub if a money order or cash payment wasn't made immediately.
-
6756209274384789 person instructed the customer to call 805-308-4820, ext-201 with payment
2526adurl% arrangements, according to the TMWA official.

253Dhttp://salafamilydentistry.com) The official says TMWA occasionally calls customers who are delinquent on their
bills, however, payments are not solicited over the phone adding that the only
phone number to pay over the phone is TMWA's main line 834-8080, option #1.

If you receive an unsolicited call asking for a payment on your TMWA account, you should take down the phone number, refuse to make a payment and call local law enforcement or TMWA at 775-834-8080.

KOLO-TV 4850 Ampere Drive Reno, NV 89502





January 27, 2014

5 reasons you should be concerned about Reno's finances

By Anjeanette Damon
adamon@rgj.com

Last month, when the Reno City Council voted to sell off a piece of land at a loss to rescue one of its bonds from default, more than one council member said their motivation to back the deal was driven by the desire to keep Reno from becoming "a Detroit," which filed for bankruptcy last year.

Reno may not be on the brink of insolvency, but it is facing some pretty significant financial challenges, not the least of which is the fact its overall debt load is nearly nine times what it was 15 years ago.

Here are five things that should concern you about the city of Reno's finances.

1) Reno is literally cash strapped

In Nevada, cities aren't allowed to run a deficit.

Each year, the money budgeted to go out must equal the money budgeted to go in. Cities also are required to keep enough cash in their bank account each month to cover monthly expenses.

For Reno, that last part is sometimes difficult.

Last week, the Reno Gazette-Journal asked if the city had spent the \$7.5 million is received from the Regional Transportation Commission for the Rosewood Lakes Golf Course land it needs for the Southeast Connector. The cash had been deposited in Reno's general fund two years ago and the newspaper was curious if the money was still there.

"Yeah, it's there," Finance Director Robert Chisel said. "Without it, I'm negative cash."

Reno's cash flow is so tight that if the city hadn't had that \$7.5 million padding, its bank account would've been in the red nine times over the past two years. In fact, even with that \$7.5 million, the city's bank account sank to just about zero in August 2012.

That's something to keep in mind as the council considers whether to close the golf course and spend that \$7.5 million.

2) Reno is leveraged to the hilt

Remember when the housing market was flying high and it seemed like a good idea to refinance your mortgage and take some cash out for a boat, or a trip to Hawaii, or some new furniture? Now the payments on that debt probably take up a big chunk of your income and you've got little left each month to spend on something fun or save for a rainy day.

That's pretty much where Reno is now.

In 1999, Reno had \$64 million in total debt. Today, the city has \$563 million in debt.

In the mid-2000s, the city spent a lot of money, issuing new bonds and refunding old bonds to take out some cash. The City Council built a train trench, helped casinos build an events center, gussied up downtown with various projects, fixed up the National Bowling Stadium.

Much of the debt — \$339 million — is from revenue bonds. That means a specific revenue source is dedicated to pay off the bonds and the city's general fund is protected. But that doesn't mean there's no risk. Default on one of those bonds would kill the city's credit rating, making it more difficult and expensive to borrow money.

In part because of the debt, the city now has little money to spend on anything else — copiers, golf carts, parking meters, the last \$900,000 needed to build a new fire station. All of it has had to be financed recently.

3) Train trench bonds are a house of cards

A decade ago, the city put together an intricate funding package to finance the construction of the downtown train trench — leveraging money from room taxes, special assessments, property leases and a countywide 1/8-cent sales tax.

But it got into trouble with the biggest chunk of that debt when city leaders were convinced to reissue the sales tax revenue bonds in a risky market that ultimately collapsed. It was forced to refinance the debt a second time in 2008, and that's where the house of cards comes in.

Under the refinancing deal, the 1/8-cent sales tax goes to pay off a senior lien held by the Bank of New York Mellon on \$137 million of debt. Then, the city is supposed to pay a subordinate lien to Goldman Sachs on \$47 million of debt. But it's not collecting enough sales tax revenue to pay both.

The city is in forbearance on the Goldman Sachs bonds, making no payment on that debt at all. It is also in litigation with Goldman Sachs over how it got into the deal in the first place.

If the city defaults on the subordinate debt, "the whole thing collapses," Chisel said.

The danger of default? All the revenue from that 1/8-cent sales tax could wind up in the Bank of New York's coffers in perpetuity.

4) Reno's not socking money away to pay retirement benefits

Of all of the city's financial challenges, this one is probably the most politically contentious.

According to the city's latest actuarial report, its unfunded liability for retirement health care benefits owed its employees is \$210 million. To keep that from growing, the city should be putting \$8.3 million a year in a trust fund. To catch up with the liability, it should be putting away \$17.6 million a year.

Of course, the city has no trust fund and is making no payments toward it. Instead, it's on a pay-as-you-go plan, with the cost to provide those benefits continuing to increase.

To relieve the city of the burgeoning liability, city leaders want to stop offering retirement health benefits to new hires. The labor unions don't like that deal and the two sides are set to face off on it

this year.

5) Reno's not socking money away to pay workers compensation benefits either

Chisel reports Reno has a \$38 million unfunded workers compensation liability.

The biggest driver of that cost, he said, is the fact Nevada is a "presumptive heart and lung" state.

That means that state law recognizes that police officers and firefighters have an increased risk for certain heart and lung diseases because of the nature of their work. Therefore, if they come down with any of those conditions, even after they leave employment, workers compensation will pay for the treatment.

Desalination is key to our water future

Jan. 28, 2014 |

rgj.com

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I am sick about hearing the word *drought*. In California, or in my beautiful Nevada.

It is time to spend money and energy on desalination plants and the pipelines to carry the seawater changed to fresh water where it is needed. All over the world, this is being done, including eight nuclear-powered desalination plants.

Yes, it costs money. Yes, it uses energy.

Imagine all the money in the so-called stimulus package used instead for massive water works for new sources of freshwater, from the sea!

It would take a great deal of time to use up all the water in the Pacific Ocean!

Jon Regas, Reno

Mug shots



17 California communities could run out of water

Posted: Jan 29, 2014 5:33 AM PST
Updated: Jan 29, 2014 6:17 AM PST

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) - California officials say 17 rural communities in the drought-stricken state are in danger of running out of water within 60 to 120 days.

The San Jose Mercury News reported Tuesday (<http://bit.ly/LmgFL2>) that the threatened water systems serve from 39 to 11,000 residents.

They range from the tiny Lompico County Water District in Santa Cruz County to districts that serve the cities of Healdsburg and Cloverdale in Sonoma County.

The newspaper says most of the affected water districts have so few customers they can't charge enough to pay for backup water supplies or repair failing equipment.

Officials will discuss solutions like trucking water in or digging more wells.

The state health department compiled the list after surveying the more than 3,000 water agencies last week. The list will be updated weekly.

Information from: San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News, <http://www.mercurynews.com>

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DRI to seed clouds in effort to wring extra water out of approaching storm (with video)

Jeff DeLong
jdelong@rgj.com

Scientists at Reno's Desert Research Institute are closely watching the approaching storm with the intent of squeezing extra moisture out of clouds.

Once temperatures get cold enough at 10,000 feet, DRI will fire up its cloud-seeding generators. DRI operates five generators atop peaks in the Tahoe-Truckee area. The machines spray particles of silver iodide into storm clouds, enhancing ice particle formation and boosting snowfall.

The best window to seed this particular storm will likely be sometime between midnight and 6 a.m. Thursday, possibly sooner, said Jeff Tilley, DRI's director of weather modification.

Cloud-seeding could prove particularly important during what has thus far been an exceedingly dry winter.

"We're trying to do the best we can with this particular storm," Tilley said. "The goal for this storm is to try and get as much water out of it as we can."

If seeding operations occur as expected, this will be the fifth time this winter the generators have been activated, Tilley said.

Last winter, DRI's cloud-seeding program produced an estimated 20,500 acre-feet of additional water, or some 6.6 billion gallons, for the Tahoe-Truckee watershed.

Exit interview: Mulroy talks about her life as Las Vegas' water chief

By HENRY BREAN LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

February 1, 2014 - 11:19pm

For a quarter century, Pat Mulroy kept water flowing to the nation's driest city.

Her work to stretch and supplement Nevada's meager share of the Colorado River helped fuel the explosive growth of the Las Vegas Valley, which saw its population triple during her time as water chief.

In the process, she earned a reputation as a clever tactician and a tough, sometimes brash negotiator. She also cultivated numerous critics and a few outright enemies, who accused her of arrogance, empire building and worse for her single-minded pursuit of more water at almost any cost.

Her rise was as unlikely as it was quick. Born in Germany to an American father and German mother, Mulroy was lured to Las Vegas from Munich by a college scholarship in 1974. She got her bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, then stayed on to earn her master's in German literature.

She dreamed then of a doctorate from Stanford and maybe career as a diplomat, but the money ran out so she went to work for Clark County in 1978 at the age of 25.

Seven years later, she was named deputy general manager of the Las Vegas Valley Water District. Four years after that, she became the first woman to lead the valley's largest water utility.

One of her first acts was a massive water grab — some called it a surprise attack — that targeted virtually all of the unappropriated groundwater within 400 miles of Las Vegas for a controversial pipeline now expected to cost billions of dollars, if it's ever built.

Mulroy consolidated her power in 1991, when she quelled bitter competition among the valley's water utilities and brought them together under a new regional agency that soon became the state's principal voice on the Colorado River.

In the 22 years since the Southern Nevada Water Authority was created, with Mulroy as its first and so far only general manager, the community and its guests have enjoyed an uninterrupted supply of 3.36 trillion gallons of water, enough to fill 168 million backyard swimming pools.

Thursday will be Mulroy's last day on the job.

As she prepared to leave the organization she built, she sat down with the Review-Journal for a wide-ranging, two-hour talk about her legacy and the future of water in Southern Nevada. This is an edited transcript of the full conversation.

R-J: They call you the water czar. Any idea where that title came from, and what do you think of it?

Mulroy: Well, it beats water witch. That's what it used to be. In the '90s it was water witch. It was hilarious. Staff gave me a broom.

I don't know who coined the phrase (water czar), but it's always made me kind of feel uncomfortable because it just sounds pompous. I never cared for it. I thought the water witch was pretty funny.

Any idea where that came from?

Oh yeah. That came out of Arizona.

Anyone in particular in Arizona?

No. Just generally Arizona. Relations weren't the greatest back then.

What was going on at the time?

Well, we here in Nevada had figured out we were going to run out of water. And in those days we were naive enough to think we were going to go out and really cause a ruckus, as we did. We said some snarky things, so then the adage got coined that I was the water witch.

I've heard several stories about times when people underestimated you or dismissed you because you are a woman. Does that still happen to you, and has there been a change over the years in how you deal with it?

Well, the way I respond to it really hasn't changed any. My usual response is just to ignore it. And it's very, very rare I experience it, and it's usually in venues where I've never met people before. Or, this one's funny: We got a call from someone. I was out shopping this weekend and our phone rang at home, and Bob (her husband) answered the phone. It was someone who wanted to talk to me about water. This was Sunday. I was at the grocery store. So the guy asks Bob, he says, "So does she know anything?" Obviously if I was a male Pat Mulroy, that question wouldn't have been asked. So it's still out there, but it's not as prevalent as it used to be.

Because your reputation precedes you now maybe?

Maybe that's it.

I remember (then-Clark County Commissioner) Jay Bingham didn't vote for me (to head up the water district) — and then apologized for the next nine years for it — because he said on the dais he didn't think I was tough enough. It was a different world back then.

Do you think your gender has offered you any advantages in this job?

I think it has. I can get away with kidding to break ice in a way that a man probably can't. I can make fun of myself and make others feel a little uncomfortable, which I've never seen a man really do.

What do you mean?

Well, if I want to point out something negative, I will point the finger at myself and talk about my own flaws, which is something I haven't really seen men do. I'm pretty comfortable with doing that. And I think at some level — if you want to think a little bit more deviously — people underestimate you, and sometimes being underestimated is an advantage. It is.

You were Clark County's first ever justice court administrator before you joined the water district as deputy general manager in 1985. At the time, how much did you know about the science and the politics of water here and in the Southwest generally?

I didn't know anything about it, and nobody in those days considered it an issue.

That was the beginning of the growth spiral. It wasn't until 1987, '88 that the valley began to figure out that they were going to run out of water. Because consumption was jumping by 17 percent, so that's when things got really ugly.

You said the Bureau of Reclamation held that dedication ceremony?

Yeah, the Southern Nevada Water System was federally funded, thanks to (then-U.S. Sen.) Howard Cannon, and the Bureau of Reclamation was the contractor. They built the facilities. Then back in the '90s, we tried to extricate ourselves from the bureau because it got to be ridiculous — I mean here we sit in an ever-growing Southern Nevada and there were major transmission lines owned by the federal government. So we bought them out and paid off our federal debt to where our facilities don't have a dime of federal money in them, which makes it very unique, especially in the West.

Do you recall the moment when you really took an interest in water?

It started as a community concern. The acrimony amongst the various water agencies was extreme, and my predecessor was scrambling, trying to figure out where water was going to come from in order to keep the economy going and the community going. And unfortunately, that acrimonious environment caused his (professional) demise. So in '89, when I got the job, the first thing I had to do was go and apologize. I'll never forget, my first visit was to Phil Speight (then Henderson's newly appointed city manager, now deputy general manager for the water authority and the district), and I apologized profusely for everything that we'd been doing and the level of acrimony that had been caused.

But it was during when that really started escalating that the reality of Southern Nevada's water situation really came to the fore. And then when I took the job, staff was coming to me and we were laying out the will-serve letters and how much we had committed against what our consumption patterns were and what we had available from the lake. We knew we had a huge deficit, so the first thing we did was file on all that in-state water.

The state had said there is an unbelievable supply of water out there. So knowing that if we said anything before we filed there would be — how do I put this? — any number of entrepreneurs who would have filed in front of us only to turn around and sell it to us, we just did all the paperwork, pulled it all together and just did a blanket filing knowing we'd be letting go of a lot of it over time. But we had to put some other source of water out there, because there was enough noise around it that it was starting to have an economic impact. The businesses, hotels, resorts were starting to get worried, worried about investing in Southern Nevada.

So then in 1990, the reality hit us that we had committed way more water than we had, and after long meetings with our attorney and the district attorney's office the conclusion was, "You are really hanging the organization's liability out there; you've got to stop." So I'll never forget it, Valentine's Day 1990 we declared a moratorium. No more will-serve letters, no more commitments.

Now there was plenty in the pipeline, so from the construction and building side you weren't going to feel it for a while. When we finally opened the doors again when the authority was created, they were beginning to feel it at the financing end, but you felt nothing in terms of the construction end. That's why it's still called the Valentine's Day Massacre.

What do you think your legacy is going to be?

Oh my heavens. Probably that the team we brought together was able to keep this community with a reliable water resource and facilities. Nobody ever was slowed down, hampered or in anyway obstructed from building wherever they wanted to build in the valley, and that was a Herculean effort. We kept this valley going during its most phenomenal growth spurt. I mean when I started, the valley had less than 600,000 people in it. Today it has 2 million. The change has been unbelievable in 25 years. And when people down the road look back, they'll say that this team was able to keep that going.

We'll get into that a bit more later, but that's also been used to bludgeon you by some people.

I accepted a long time ago that everything we do will always have its supporters and its detractors. This is much too volatile an arena, and people have some real skewed misperceptions.

If you had asked me that question in a different way — What am I proudest of? — I am proudest probably of all the agreements we were able to forge on the (Colorado River), and the change that we were able to bring about in river law and river relations that are really going to serve this community well in the future. That's what, in my mind, is really critically important.

Is that what you'd like to be remembered for?

That is exactly what I'd like to be remembered for because I think it's going to be really foundational. I mean look at Lake Mead (now), and it's going to go down some more. And then imagine what California's condition is right now. They're in the worst state drought of their history. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California takes half of its water from the Bay Delta, which is from the Sierras, and half from the Colorado. We know they are going to lean heavily on the Colorado River this year.

Well, I'm really happy that the relationships that we've forged with California and with the other partners are such that that won't be a cause of acrimony, that we're going to be able to work our way through it. Because the challenges are only going to get more daunting.

Was it hard early on to get anyone on the river to listen to little old Nevada?

It was at first. At first they laughed. And then we did some outrageous things, and they stopped laughing. Sometimes you have to get outrageous for people to sit up and pay attention.

Such as?

Well, we put ads in the Denver Post that we were going to buy water in the state of Colorado. It was hilarious. It was right after the water authority was created and the Legislature had then changed the composition of the Colorado River Commission to include three of the authority's board members, so it was in the mid-'90s, and we got pretty persnickety.

And you know what else was really helpful and actually kind of funny? When we filed for the in-state project, the rural counties hired (former Arizona Gov.) Bruce Babbitt (to represent them). And then when Bruce became Clinton's secretary of Interior, he made a commitment to then Gov. Bob Miller that in lieu of building the in-state project he would fix Nevada's problems on the river. So the double punch with us now being able to speak as a united front and not being torn internally and Bruce pushing from the other side, from D.C., that's when things started to change and that's when people started taking us seriously.

Did Babbitt make good on his promise to fix Nevada's problems on the river?

The week before he left office, we signed the Interim Surplus Guidelines, and that was when I took a resource plan to the board with a 50-year supply from the Colorado River. We were able to overuse Lake Mead as long as it was above a certain elevation, and in those days there was zero probability that we would have a drought like the one we've been living through. And we had our first (water) banking arrangement with Arizona, and if you had asked any of us at that time, we knew that this would just open the door to future arrangements with other states. I was easily envisioning desalters in California and exchanging water that way, because as long as the river is stable that's a no-brainer. So we were feeling pretty comfortable and pretty secure.

What were you trying to accomplish with those ads in the Denver Post?

To wake Colorado up, that Nevada was going to be such a problem that Nevada's problem had to be fixed.

What did the ads say?

They simply said the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Colorado River Commission are interested in talking to anyone who has a water supply from the Colorado River that can be moved through the river. I mean we were going right for the juggernaut of the law. And we had hearings. We rented a big room at Cashman Center, and the CRC and the SNWA boards sat together, and people came in offering up their water, describing the water, giving us proposals. The Colorado representatives were ashen white in the back of the room.

And if I was Colorado, sitting here today, I would have felt the same way. Absolutely. Because I could see my whole water supply being sold downstream.

That was the trigger that actually got the 2000 agreement signed, the interim surplus signed. Everyone at that point got really serious that something had to happen. California had to be given a soft landing so it could wean itself from its overuse, and Nevada had to be given access to additional supplies.

What's your biggest regret?

You know what? It's something very recent: that whole disaster of 2012, when we had to raise rates overnight. It was the first time we had done it without ... a citizen's process, and there was no option; we had no choice but to do it, because we had to sell the 300 million (dollars) in bonds. That will always be a huge regret of mine. Not having started it sooner. As much as we tried to reach out, you know I didn't do a very good job, and I'll take full responsibility for it. I never blamed the business community for their reaction. We were in panic mode. My CFO had died unexpectedly, and I had total chaos going over here. I knew we had to go to the street and I knew we had to sell \$300 million, but I can't help but feel I could have done a much better job of it. I will always regret how it was done.

According to many of your critics, you have spent your career literally carrying water for developers and unchecked growth. The knock against you is that you never stood up and said we don't have enough water and we can't grow anymore. Why didn't you do that?

Because once land is in private ownership, the body of law that protects the private landowner is immense. And our laws are pretty clear. We can't selectively say, "Oh we like you, we'll give you water, but we don't like you and we're not going to give you water." When you say you have no water, it is across the board. So who is growth? Is it my kids who want to buy a house? Is it the next business that comes to town that wants to provide jobs for the community? I mean we as a human race are expanding. Why would it not happen here?

It's not a realistic thing. It's about land. There's one community that successfully limits growth, and that's Boulder City. Why? They own every square inch of land, and they only release it for development as they see fit.

You can't control growth through your utilities.

It's not your job.

That too. It's not. Why me? Go talk to the governor. Go talk to the elected officials. You know? I'm willing to be the bad guy on any number of things, but there are some things I'm not willing to be the bad guy on.

We've always come at it from, "OK, if this is where you want to be, this is what you're going to have to do to get there." That's our job. You want this community to grow and you want it to prosper. All right, then you're going to have to pay to build facilities to bring in additional water, you're going to have to start using less per capita to stretch what you have and you're going to have to actively get into long-term resource planning. If you're willing to do those things, then you can have what you want.

How much do you think water should cost, and do you think we're paying enough for our water now?

See, I've always hated this discussion, because the economists will tell you that we don't pay enough for water. I will push back on that because I think it's a little more complex than that. There is an enormous difference between oil and water or even power and water. I mean human life has survived on this planet for how many thousands of years and there was no electricity and there was no oil and there was no gas. But they've never been able to survive without water. It is essential for life. And I am a big believer that when you pay your water bill, you're not paying for the resource. What you're paying for is having it treated and pumped to your home so that it's readily available to you. You're paying for the facilities. And I will always believe that you should never charge more than you actually have to in order to deliver safe, reliable water to your customers when they need it.

Even under a scenario where up to three-quarters of the water is not used indoors, it's actually going outside and being used on landscaping?

Well that's why the tiered rate structure. That's a tool. That's a tool to wake people up that there's a category of water that's considered waste. Communities, especially around the West, have tried so many different methods of approaching this.

I think that using your pricing structure to send appropriate signals is a good thing. But we have full cost recovery. To have that kind of cost recovery inflated by some commodity price? I think you would get the ugliest reaction you've ever seen in your life.

What was the conservation ethic like when you took over at the water district?

There wasn't one. It was the exact opposite. It was, "We want to sell as much as we can." There's still places in this country that work on the same premise because for them it's revenue. They don't have a resource shortage, so they just see it as a revenue opportunity. And city councils everywhere in the United States dip into their water and wastewater funds. That's how they started. That's why they're mostly departments in cities. They're revenue sources, and that's why the general public has the skewed perspective that a water rate is a tax but your power bill is a utility bill. It's a difference of who owns it.

How hard was it to foster conservation where there was none before?

You know it actually wasn't as bad as it could have been. I think the fact that we didn't just charge people more — we gave them the financial tools to make the changes they needed to make — went a long way.

I think there was a generational shift, and I think people were ready for it. And it gave them an opportunity to lower their water bill. I think we pushed too far on that end, because as we discussed earlier what you're really paying for is for the facilities, not the resource. But it was one of the tools in the quiver.

Once we got past the fountains issue, it got a lot easier. Fountains were brutal. I completely didn't see that one coming, that people would get that passionate about having a fountain in front of a bank building and in front of a grocery store or in a business park or the HOAs that have water features. That one lost me.

You said you think you pushed too hard on cutting water use. What do you mean?

We loaded too much of costs into conservation where now that it's been successful we still have the same debt service. And that debt service is going to be the same whether we sell a thousand gallons or we sell a million gallons, so we're having to go back and "reward" customers constantly by raising their bills.

And it's happening everywhere in the United States. I can't tell you how many of my peers are going through the exact same community discussions. Because you are not paying for the water itself. You are paying for very expensive infrastructure that delivers it to you.

That's my favorite response to somebody who yells at me that water is a basic human right. I say, "You're right. Here's your bucket. Go down to Lake Mead and knock yourself out. Take as much as you want." What you don't have a basic right to is that somebody treats it to a standard that assures your health and delivers it to your house to where when you turn the tap on it comes out. If the postman delivers you a letter, somebody's paid for the postage. Everything you have delivered to the house costs something. Why should this not cost you something?

How much further can the current incentive-based conservation measures go?

As long as we end every single year having more people come to us wanting to remove grass than we have money for and we have to roll people into the following year, we're not there yet. I think there's still lots of opportunity.

You get knocked around a lot for not incorporating indoor water use into your conservation programs. But even if all the water that goes down our drains is sent back to Lake Mead and recycled, shouldn't we still try to use less of it?

That was the fountain issue. Because at the end of the day, not even the fountains used that much water. It's a perception issue, and people aren't going to be regulated in order to avert perceptions. They are just not going to put up with it.

It doesn't do anything, and none of us could stand up straight-faced and say that it would.

The plumbing code in the nation and in Nevada is changing anyway. I mean technology and fixtures are taking care of the problem, so why would you want to burden the ratepayer with an incentive that the private sector is already taking care of as they're developing more efficient shower heads, more efficient toilets?

The rural Nevada pipeline project has been with you your entire career here.

Yes, unfortunately.

Was there ever a time when you considered killing it?

Absolutely, 2000. And staff rightfully convinced me that killing it was not a good idea. It needed to stay in the portfolio. We could stop being active around it and spending money around it, but we needed to leave our filings in place, just in case.

Why did you want to kill it?

Because I really believed we would solve Nevada's water needs from the river — or by using the river as a conduit for desalt or other joint projects — for a very long time. I mean if we didn't have this drought, we never would have started kick-starting that in-state project again. When I took this job and we filed for the water rights, I always said Southern Nevada has two choices: It has to either get additional resources off the Colorado River or it has to go in state. There is no third alternative for us. Just based on geography. Something had to give, and at first it appeared the Colorado River was going to be the solution. The rest is history. Along came the drought.

At potentially \$15 billion ...

You love that number, don't you?

Well, I have reported different numbers over the years, certainly, but how can the community and the ratepayers afford a project like this?

When that day comes, when that discussion has to happen, that river is going to be in crisis. And the question this community will be asking itself won't be whether they can afford it but can they afford not to. Because the trade-offs will be pretty dramatic. That means every single possible avenue on that river will have been explored.

And that's where all our energy is. All our energy is around not having to build that project. But knowing that if we took it out of the resource plan now and it wasn't a viable project, you'd have economic disaster down here.

That's why I keep leaning on the Colorado River, because if that system as a whole can be stabilized — and that system as a whole can start thinking systemically as a whole river community, and look at its aggregate water resources, and thereby provide additional resources for Southern Nevada — then the in-state project isn't necessary.

Nothing would have delighted me more than to let go of it.

You've heard this way more than I have, and I've heard it a lot, but anytime the in-state water project comes up the Owens Valley comparison is made.

I know.

Have you traveled to Owens Valley?

Absolutely.

And what did you think when you saw it?

Owens Valley is one of the prettiest valleys you've ever seen. It's a nature preserve is really what it is now.

It was never (about) Owens Valley, it was Mono Lake. And what happened was they drained the entire lake and created the dust problem. It wasn't the groundwater pumping that caused the dust. It was the elimination of a surface water supply essentially. That's where the problem came in.

And it was an (agriculture)-urban tug-of-war. If you talk to L.A., they went into Owens Valley and they bought the water. They did. They paid the farmer for the water, which was the straight-line approach that existed in those days. Now they didn't know somebody was going to steal that money from the farmers eventually. But it became this loss of family heritage around agriculture. They sold the water and then bemoaned the fact that there was no more agriculture in the valley.

It is not an environmental disaster area by any stretch of the imagination. I would have greater environmental concerns about the Salton Sea than I would about Owens Valley.

When it comes to the pipeline, do think there will come a day when the people of rural Nevada will trust the Southern Nevada Water Authority? And should they?

No, I do not think they will ever trust us, and if I were in their shoes I'm not sure I would either. I think there is another structure that will have to emerge that gives them a greater feeling of trust but verify, that they have the ability to make sure that those impacts don't happen. Trust? I'm not sure we'll see trust at that level, but I think we can find a way to coexist where they don't feel we're simply taking things away from them willy-nilly as we would want to.

The other big concern raised with the project is that it won't stop there. You build the pipeline and down the road Las Vegas needs more water, so the pipeline gets pushed farther north or west or whatever. Do you think that's a possibility some day?

I think that's a straight-line assumption. Look, I talked about it earlier when I talked about thinking about systems. The Colorado River system is a pretty diverse system. It reaches over into the Platte and the Arkansas through the Front Range uses. It reaches into the Great Basin, because the Colorado River comes into the Great Basin when it comes into Salt Lake. It goes into the Rio. It goes into the central Phoenix cities. It goes into Southern California, (and) that's tied to Northern California. I think what you're going to see is a very adaptive plan that wraps its arms around a much larger watershed where water moves around more freely. And if this pocket of the watershed is having a problem at that time, the larger system can back it up. I see a much more fluid environment. The day will come when the ranchers and the small communities in rural Nevada are going to need help with water resources. Whether it's growth-driven or drought-driven is pretty irrelevant. What they haven't realized yet is that no one community can do it on its own. If Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, with 20 million people, can't do it on its own, a small rural community can't either. They're going to need partners. They're going to need help. They're going to need us to back off. We're going to have to help them have a water supply as well. That's what I see. I see a very different reality out there.

Are you saying that Southern Nevada might actually provide water to them in times of need?

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Let's assume you have a bad drought in the Great Basin, a smaller regional drought, and there was plenty of snowfall in Wyoming and Colorado, and we've done enough storage in banking and off-system storage that we could actually take out groundwater rights and move them to a rural community. We will have recharged that basin, we will have kept that basin healthy and we will be a backup supply for those rural communities. I think that's where the future is. Because what they're envisioning is a 19th century confrontation, and that's not where the future is.

Even if state water law allows it, do you think it is morally right for the water authority to go up to a place like White Pine County's Spring Valley and pump so much water that it changes what kinds of plants grow there?

Like they're doing now? The biggest cause of dust in the Great Basin — and people are going to scream when I say it — is cattle ranching. It is the devegetation from cattle ranching.

Look, you can't take water from anywhere without having some impact. It's what level of impact. Taking water from the Colorado River has an impact. Taking water from our groundwater basin has an impact. It's how do you artificially recharge, how do you manage the basin.

There's going to be an impact. Cities cannot, rural communities cannot, ranchers cannot take water from a source without having some kind of impact. That impact range is very broad. Where on that continuum will it fall, and what are we willing to say is an acceptable impact and what is an unacceptable impact.

(White Pine County rancher and pipeline opponent) Dean Baker will tell you himself that he has caused any number of springs to dry up, any number of habitats to be destroyed. So what are the habitats that we feel, as a larger state and a larger Western community, need to be protected and how do we protect them?

Water can't come from anywhere, not even from the ocean, without an impact. So to say we want zero impact is not possible. It's not possible.

That is an argument Dean Baker likes to make a lot ...

Well, then let's wipe out all groundwater rights in the state of Nevada.

I think the point he makes when he brings that up is, "I'm doing damage myself, and the water authority wants to come in here and pump a great deal more water, so their damage will be significantly worse."

And Dean Baker does no artificial recharge. He pumps the same amount from his well every single year. He doesn't manage it with other resources available. It's not going to be a steady stream of water coming in from there. If there's ample water on the Colorado River, we'll be bringing it in from the Colorado River. It's a balancing. Well areas will be allowed to rest. You move your pumping around. He has neither the land mass nor the financial resources to be able to manage that groundwater basin in the way we're envisioning managing it. So I understand what he's saying, but his perspective is skewed.

Let's turn to the Colorado River. What do you think the future is going to look like for the river and its users?

I think the biggest threat for the river community right now is the pace at which the drought is deepening. It's not the fact that we're in a drought. It's the rate of the degradation of the water supply, because it makes it very difficult to adjust to it. I think you're going to see some efforts to store more water in Lake Mead. Maybe even the upper basin will store water in Lake Powell to protect power deliveries and power supplies, because it's a huge revenue source for them.

And I think that will be the first step. I think the lower basin states will have to take responsibility for Mead and the upper basin states will have to take responsibility for Powell.

It's no different than the groundwater recharge that we do. You put the water there today in order to bring it back and recover it and restore it. If we have a good, wet year, leave it in the reservoir. Don't move it out of the reservoir.

We always had this regimen where if the reservoir got healthy you could overuse. I think that overuse concept is gone.

I think you're going to see a closer relationship with Mexico. I think you'll start seeing desalters, probably in Mexico first. I think you'll see us being able to utilize water from those desalters, but not under drought conditions, and that's where Southern Nevada has to back itself up however they can.

I think you'll see the river community start really spending (on things) that will have no direct benefit to community X but will benefit the system. Those will be very difficult conversations for us to have with ratepayers, but I think they're critical. And it will evolve. It will adapt as conditions change.

And then I think there is a larger conversation that's ultimately going to have to happen. Once we stop thinking in terms of districts, communities and states and start thinking we are citizens of a larger region, then we can start looking at how regions interconnect with each other. Does that provide any opportunities for us? Does it provide opportunities for them? Are there opportunities for mutual problem solving?

I think that is going to absolutely have to happen at some point.

The so-called “Law of the River” reminds me of the Ark of the Covenant from the Indiana Jones movie: basically an old and very precious artifact that no one should ever be allowed to open.

And doesn't have to be. Like all laws, it's flexible. What it does at its essence is, seven states can do whatever seven states can agree to do, but no one state, no matter how big and how populated it is, can roll its neighbors. It takes it out of the presidential race. It takes it out of the senatorial races. It takes it out of the body politic and creates a level playing field. That's all it really does.

There are ways that you can work within it that let you do all the things you need to do while protecting those that would otherwise feel threatened.

So it doesn't matter that the law divvies up water among the states in amounts the river can't seem to supply?

That water is not there. The 20th century was one of the wettest centuries in 1,200 years, so you've got 20th century hydrology matched with a 20th century compact that assumes that hydrology, and we have a 21st century real water supply. If you include evaporation and the Mexican treaty, you've got a total use of 18 and a half million (acre-feet). You're really looking at (a supply of) closer to 12 million, 11 or 12, and that's a moderate number. There are some who would say it's even less than that. You're talking about a deficit, so why would you want to change a foundational document that establishes a relationship? Because everyone is going to have to give up water, and it requires seven legislatures to approve it, seven governors to sign it, Congress to approve it and the president to sign it. And everybody has to give something up. Why go through the pain if you don't have to? Think about how long that's going to take, and at the end of the day, are you really going to be in a better place than you would be if you just worked within its parameters and use it as a foundational document? I don't think so.

Wouldn't Nevada be in a better place?

Why? You're going to have to give up water too. Why would you be the only state to not give up water? Because of the immensity of our delegation?

No, because we got so little to begin with.

Oh every state's got its own story to tell. Every state has its own story to tell. California is the food basket for the country. Arizona is part of the food basket. The water all comes from the upper basin. It's within their geography. You tell me what state, I'll tell you their story. So yes, we didn't have any agriculture (when the river was divvied up). We asked for 300,000 (acre-feet). We got what we asked for. So, what? Now we say, "Oh, we changed our mind"? Well everybody is going to change their mind.

Some people use that as an argument to do just that. They say that in addition to the compact being based on 20th century hydrology, the basin doesn't look the same anymore ...

That's right. Absolutely. So everybody's going to have to give something up. Tell me who gets re-elected giving up the state's birthright. And what have you accomplished at the end of the day? The number you come up with may be wrong again. Aren't you better off managing the system recognizing you have less to work with? I don't care what you call it, but manage the system with having less water, and then forget what the compact says. Forget it. It doesn't matter.

Well it kind of does, doesn't it? You're managing the system right now ...

But not from compact numbers. We're managing it from real hydrology as it occurs year to year and real reservoir elevations.

But California still gets their allotment, and Arizona still gets their allotment, and ...

But what they've been doing is leaving it behind in Lake Mead. And Nevada gets its allotment, and we leave it behind in Lake Mead. It's a paper number.

How much is California leaving in the lake?

Last year they probably left 300,000 acre-feet behind, if not more.

But doesn't California need all the water it can get? Why are they doing it?

Because they know the system can't crash. It's in their best interests for the system not to crash.

So they're doing it for Nevada, to protect the lake level and our ability to draw water from it?

See? There you go. We've got to stop thinking state to state. It's the same thing that happened when we created the authority. It doesn't matter if the individual benefit really gets up to what the other guy gets. It's, does the system survive? If the system survives, then everybody survives. If the system crashes, trust me, there will be no one that's not affected.

We've heard a lot of really radical ideas over the years for how to supplement the Colorado River. You've pitched a few of them yourself. Which ones seem most likely to happen some day?

I think that given the volatility of what's happening on the Mississippi system, the Corps of Engineers is going to have to rethink flood control. Look, it's not just us. You talk to Gov. Brownback in Kansas. There are pockets in the Ogallala Aquifer that have maybe 15 or 20 years left in them. He'll have whole farming communities wiped out. Why aren't we recharging it? Why are we just letting (Mississippi River floodwater) go as waste into an ocean we're worried about rising too much? Why are we not thinking about how do we divert that, get it into a groundwater basin? I mean my friends in New Orleans say take it now, get it out. So start thinking about it in a larger context. If we in the water community can't do it, I don't know who can.

What's the first thing you think will happen? You mentioned desalting plants in Mexico ...

I think that one is ready to pop.

And Nevada will own a stake in one?

I think the lower basin will do it collectively. I think that's next.

After 25 years on the job, what advice do you have for future leaders of the Southern Nevada Water Authority?

Look for solutions of mutual benefit. Do not start confrontations. Do not go to court. Do not pick fights you don't need. Listen to what the needs of the others are so that you understand them. Do as much listening as you do talking. And always remember that if the system crashes, there will not be a winner left standing. Everyone will go down. There won't be winners and losers. Those days are over.

That's my advice.

What are you going to miss about this job?

I'm going to miss the people. I'm going to miss the challenges, and I'm going to miss the people. For me the sadness is all around the human aspect of this. That will be hard.

What won't you miss?

I've become absolutely numb to the attacks and the beatings and the ugliness that circles around no matter who sits in this chair. It doesn't matter who you are, you're going to get attacked — for general sport if for no other reason. Because there's nothing you can do in this field that isn't going to be controversial. Everything is going to be controversial. That I won't miss.

I don't read good news or bad news. I'll read the entire paper except the stories around water.

Did you read them before?

I used to read them, and I got an ulcer and I went, "I'm not reading this anymore."

When did that happen?

Oh, when the drought started. I just stopped reading them. I don't want to read the good stuff, I don't want to read the bad stuff. You can really lose perspective in one of two ways: You can start believing everything good that's been said about you and internalize that, or you can take everything that's ugly and take it to heart.

I think anybody that's in a CEO position, if they're completely honest, they know where they made mistakes, they know what they would have done differently, and they know what they're proud to have accomplished.

What made you decide now is the time to leave?

I turned 60. It's really easy. I turned 60 and at the same time I had 25 years in this job. I'm not done working, but I'm ready to do something else. I really am ready to do something else.

You know I took a job 25 years ago and found a passion. And I really believe that water is going to be ... a huge cause of concern and discussion and change in the 21st century. I really believe that. Do the simple math: You add 2 billion more people to this planet, what are you going to do? How are you going to grow the food? Where's it going to come from?

So what are you going to do next?

I don't know yet. I've got to catch my breath first. I'm going to decompress for a couple of months first. I've already got speaking engagements out there, but whatever.

They still want you to speak when you're unemployed?

Yeah, they do. They actually do. Foolish people.

You know, lots of people have already decided what you're going to do next. I've heard several rumors and theories so far.

Oh, I'm sure lots of people have thought of lots of things for me to do. I've heard some very interesting ideas. One of the ones I just can't stop laughing at is running for office. The N and the O can't be big enough and loud enough and more emphatic. I have never filed for office. No, no, no.

I'm going to stay true to what I've given my life to and what I've worked on for so long and really try to make an impact in that area. At some level — and I haven't figured out where or how I'm going to do it yet — I want to get involved in the larger, international cause of helping underdeveloped, poorer areas of the world gain access to safe drinking water. That I do want to do.

Are you going to go back to lobbying? That's one of the rumors I've heard.

Oh God, no. Lobbying? No thank you. They're safe. The Legislature is safe from me.

Consulting then?

Well I am going to open an LLC, just in order to have options. I don't know what I'm going to do with that LLC, but I'm going to open one.

Does it have a name yet?

No, it has no name. Got any ideas?

How about Water Witch?

There you go. Witches Incorporated. Witches and Associates.

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbreaan@reviewjournal.com and 702-383-0350. Follow him on Twitter at [@RefriedBrean](https://twitter.com/RefriedBrean).



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Northern Nevada farmers ready for dry season

By Robert Perea

rperea@masonvalleynews.com

Agricultural water right holders along the East Walker River received 23 percent of their normal allocation last spring, while those on the West Walker got just 9 percent.

With hardly any snowpack in the Sierra so far this winter, farmers and ranchers are worried that this year might be even worse.

"The way the snowpack looks just now, we'll get virtually no river water for irrigation," said Mason Valley rancher Jim Snyder.

U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., who owns a ranch in Smith Valley, said while farmers can't control a drought, it exacerbates all of their existing problems.

"The drought, frankly, has its fingers in everything," Heller said. "It affects rural Nevada in everything that they do. I can't emphasize enough how significant the impact is."

With little water in the Walker River, hardly any in storage at Bridgeport and Topaz reservoirs, and a low snowpack, farmers already are thinking about how best to manage what water they will have.

Brad Johnston, chief strategy officer and general counsel for Peri & Sons Farms, said the company's crews are working to make sure all wells are in working order and planning to determine if the company will fallow any ground this spring.

"We all hope things change, but even if they do, there's a lot of catching up to do in February and March," Johnston said.

Snyder said those farmers who own supplemental underground water rights will depend heavily on their wells to irrigate this year.

"We're doing whatever we can to get wells ready," Snyder said. "We're working to get our ditches and delivery systems be clean as possible."

Snyder said farmers are keeping a close eye on the water situation to determine before planting season whether they will have to fallow ground that was previously in production.

"Higher-value crops, like onions and crops that are already planted, will be priority," Snyder said. "Alfalfa is a perennial crop but it's a lower crop value, so some alfalfa acreage will not get water."

Snyder said some water would be banked for more profitable crops.

"You certainly would not invest in that without being sure," he said.

Ideally, Snyder said an alfalfa field would get watered six to eight times an irrigation season. Last

year, he said his fields got water four to six times, and this year he's expecting it to be even less.

"In case of alfalfa, you irrigate until you run out of water, then stop," he said. "I think most of those things are just in the farmers' mind and psyche and kind of affecting everybody's attitude and pessimism."

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Religious leaders, farmers pray for water in West

By MARTIN GRIFFITH

Associated Press February 2, 2014 Updated 19 hours ago

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RENO, Nev. — Religious leaders of multiple faiths and farmers in Nevada and Utah turned to prayer this weekend for help easing severe drought conditions gripping the West.

The plea to above comes weeks after the federal government declared parts of 11 parched Western and Central states natural disaster areas.

Faith leaders asked for divine intervention during a special multifaith service Saturday at a Mormon church in the Reno suburb of Sparks. And on Sunday, the Utah Farm Bureau Federation asked the public to join in prayer and fasting for snow and rain for livestock and crops as part of its Harvesting Faith event.

"We can't go to the Legislature to ask for help, (so) we decided to go to the guy upstairs," Ron Gibson, a dairy farmer in Weber County, Utah, told the Deseret News. "One thing you learn as a farmer is most of the things that happen in your life are totally out of your control."

Rajan Zed, who organized the Nevada service, said Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha'i and other faith leaders who participated are confident it'll bring positive results.

"When God sees (all these) leaders sitting together in unity and harmony and praying in diverse traditions and seeking common good for the entire community, God will be naturally moved to provide the devotees relief from drought so that it will not affect their quality of life, livelihood and health," Zed said.

The special events were held two weeks after the federal government designated portions of 11 drought-ridden Western and Central states as primary natural disaster areas, highlighting the financial strain the lack of snow and rain is likely to bring to farmers in those regions.

The announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture included counties in Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Kansas, Texas, Utah, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Oklahoma and California.

California officials announced Friday they won't send any water from the state's vast reservoir system to local agencies beginning this spring, an unprecedented move that affects drinking water supplies for 25 million people and irrigation for 1 million acres of farmland.

A snow survey on Thursday in the Sierra Nevada, one of the state's key water sources, found the water content in the snowpack is just 12 percent of normal.

Some Nevada farmers have said they're considering not irrigating fields after three years of below-normal rain and snow.

While Utah also is in dire need of moisture, the agricultural community remains optimistic after a day of prayer and fasting, said Leland Hogan, president of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation.

"We all believe in a greater good and in a higher being," he said. "Through that belief, we feel that there can be intervention into what we have, that if we can show forth faith ... that we could have more moisture than what we have today."

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Kelly Scott: Why we've asked for the PERS data

Column by Kelly Scott, RGJ Executive Editor

In the past week, I've received many calls, emails and letters from people who received a letter from the state Public Employees' Retirement System.

In it, PERS officials told people about a recent Nevada Supreme Court decision that found some information about benefits and recipients is in fact public information in accordance with the state's public records laws.

In 2011, the RGJ requested the name of the employee, dates of hiring and retirement, government employer, final salary and retirement benefit. That request was the basis of the Supreme Court case

We did not ask for individual PERS files. We did not request anyone's Social Security number, address, banking or personal financial information.

That data was requested as one part of our examination into the future of our state's Public Employees' Retirement System.

We are examining the system for signs of corruption, inefficiencies and unethical or illegal behavior. We hope to independently review the entire system to ensure that it is not being abused. We also want to examine the benefit packages of elected public officials.

We have no intention of printing the names of all 47,000 people in the system and their associated benefits unless that specific information is directly relevant to stories we pursue.

So far, PERS has released only one month's worth of data. We have that data but are continuing to ask for more months so we have a better understanding of trends, anomalies, etc.

Many of you have asked when you've called or emailed about why we need your names as part of the data. The answer is that our reporters have no way of looking for inconsistencies without the names of all participants in the system.

For example, if I wanted to pull out the PERS payments for all elected officials, how would I be able to do that without looking for names? Or, if I wanted to make sure PERS payments weren't mistakenly going to people who had died, how else would I be able to identify that?

Now, that being said, I have no idea if any of those troubles exist in the system. But, since the system plays a big role in the financial security of so many Nevadans, it is critically important that this information be reviewed outside of the relatively limited parameters of a typical financial audit.

One of our roles as a news organization is to independently analyze such things to ensure the public discussion is informed. It's part of our role in a democratic society to investigate such stories. We do it for the greater good of our readers, community and Nevada.

News reports in recent years have said that the retirement system could be short anywhere from \$10

billion to \$40 billion in promised benefits. If that's true, that's a discussion Nevadans need to have using the facts.

It's not a discussion that those in PERS should have in a vacuum, without public input. Everyone — whether they participate in the system or not — should have access to that information.

On another note: You may have noticed that we've introduced lots of changes this past week in the RGJ. I'd like to hear what you think about them. How can you share your thoughts?

- Email me. Drop me a line at feedback@rgj.com.
- Catch me on Twitter. I'm @KellyAnnScott. Just tweet at me.
- Or, let's meet in person. Come by the RGJ between 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 4. We'll have coffee in our lobby.

Kelly Scott is the Reno Gazette-Journal's

executive editor.



February 4, 2014

More than ever, we can't afford to waste our water

Absent a Fabulous February or perhaps a Miracle March, this is going to be a tough year for water users in Northern Nevada, as in much of the West.

When the experts went into the mountains to measure the snowpack on Friday, the last day of January, the numbers were pretty grim: the Truckee River Basin was found to be just 15 percent of average, the Lake Tahoe Basin was at 25 percent, the Walker River was 26 percent and the Carson River was 32 percent.

It is going to take one heck of a snowstorm to get us back to anywhere near normal for the 2014 water season. No one should count on it.

Northern Nevada isn't alone.

For the first time in the 54-year history of the California State Water Project, officials say they won't send any water from the state's reservoirs to local agencies beginning in the spring, affecting the water supplies of 25 million people and irrigation for one million acres of farmland. Farmers who rely on a separate system of federal reservoirs and canals expect to receive just a fraction of their normal allocations. (As though things weren't already tough enough for farmers in the West, a report on Monday said that a week of freezing temperatures in December will wipe out one-quarter of California's citrus industry this year.)

Residents of Reno-Sparks probably won't feel the direct effects of the ongoing drought — the word is used with some hesitation because this area seemingly is in a perpetual state of water deficit — for at least a few years, thanks to the water that local agencies put into storage in better years. As in California, however, ranchers and farmers are going to have a considerably tougher time if there isn't a significant increase in the snowpack. Even those who have access to well water to make up for the loss of surface irrigation will see their costs rise exponentially.

The dry spell, which has continued even as parts of the Southeast and East have been digging out of unusual snowstorms, will raise new questions about the effects of climate change, whether natural or man-made, on the nation's resources and how well we are prepared to deal with it. When drought is felt on the farmlands of the West, it's also sure to be felt in grocery stores throughout the country.

Locally, it will raise new questions about growth at the same time as the construction and real estate industries are starting to show signs of life after a devastating few years following the recession and the collapse of the mortgage banking industry. It might even revive those silly old questions about tourists from water-short California coming to Reno to luxuriate with lengthy showers at our expense. Much has changed in the Truckee Meadows since the days when those questions were front and center. The advent of water meters, for instance, has cut water consumption. The Truckee River agreement has given the Truckee Meadows Water Authority the ability to put water away for a nonrainy day.

But the dry spell also should serve as a reminder that water remains a precious commodity in Northern Nevada and the West. With the snowpack a fraction of normal, conservation is as important as it's been in recent memory. Water, now more than ever, is a resource that we simply cannot afford to waste.

ISSUE: Declining snowpack

OUR VIEW: With the Truckee River Basin at just 15 percent of normal and Lake Tahoe at 25 percent, water conservation will be more important than ever this year.



Featured Facility:

Incline Village Water Disinfection Plant

By: Joseph Zalla, BAO CH2M Hill

Brad Johnson, PE, Engineering Manager, Incline Village GID

Harvey Johnson, Utilities Superintendent, Incline Village GID

The Incline Village General Improvement District (IVGID) owns and operates the Burnt Cedar Water Disinfection Plant (BCWDP) located on the north shore of Lake Tahoe. The BCWDP produces 5,900-gallons per minute (gpm) of drinking water for Incline Village, Nevada. The source water is Lake Tahoe and it is currently unfiltered as it meets the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filtration avoidance criteria.

The BCWDP treatment process previously included an ozone system followed by free chlorine residual disinfection. The ozone system was commissioned in 1995 and was one of the earliest installations using sidestream ozone injection with a pipeline contactor. The facility required improvements/modifications to continue reliable operation, as well as additional treatment to comply with the EPA's Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2ESWTR).

Several treatment approaches were evaluated to achieve compliance with the LT2ESWTR requirements and to meet the overall objectives of the project. Increasing the ozone system capacity, ultraviolet (UV) light disinfection, an advanced oxidation process (AOP), filtration alternatives, and the continued use of ozone as a taste and odor control barrier, with the addition of AOP.

A cost-benefit analysis was conducted to compare the treatment approaches using non-

monetary criteria and project costs. UV disinfection was selected as the preferred treatment approach. The ozone system will be used to achieve the required 4-log virus inactivation as well as provide taste and odor control. UV will provide 3-log Giardia inactivation, as well as the Cryptosporidium inactivation required by the LT2ESWTR.

A condition assessment was conducted of the BCWDP to identify the improvements/modifications required to continue reliable operation and implement the preferred treatment approach. The existing ozone generators were over 15 years old and had a declining production capacity. Parts for the generators were no longer being manufactured so they were replaced with new units to improve the reliability of the ozone operation.

Ozone treatability testing was conducted to establish the parameters required to design the new generators. The ozone demand and residual decay rate were determined from the bench-scale testing. Ozone quenching reaction tests were also conducted to determine the chemical dose and reaction time required to quench ozone using calcium thiosulfate. This testing provided the information to establish the ozone dose and contact time needed to meet the virus CT required.

Cont' on pages 2

Cont' - Incline Village Water Disinfection Plant

Implementation and operation of these new disinfection systems as well as other plant improvements faced a few unique challenges that included the following:

- The regional planning association limits outdoor construction activities around Lake Tahoe to a 5-month window period annually. In addition, the planning association places requirements and restrictions on the construction of new structures near the lake. The project overcame these challenges by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and utilizing previously occupied footprint at the BCWDP in order to implement these new disinfection systems.
- The BCWDP needed to remain online and operational throughout construction except for strategic shutdown periods for tie-in connections. Installation of the new UV and ozone disinfection processes required close coordination between plant operations staff, the contractor, and the regulatory agencies,

to ensure disinfection compliance at all times during construction.

- UV operation and maintenance with extraordinarily high water quality (average UV transmittance of 99 percent) presented challenges with respect to programming the UV control system and performing routine calibration procedures on the equipment.
- The UV system was installed and commissioned during the emergence of issues surrounding the disinfection performance of medium-pressure UV reactors at low wavelengths.



UV lights

The BCWDP treatment process designed by CH2M Hill includes ozone disinfection and ultraviolet (UV) disinfection systems followed by free chlorine residual disinfection. The Ozone Disinfection System provides the required virus inactivation of unfiltered raw water from Lake Tahoe, oxidizes taste and odor causing compounds, and enhances reduction of disinfection byproduct precursors. The UV Disinfection System provides Cryptosporidium and Giardia inactivation to meet regulatory requirements. The Ozone and UV Disinfection

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Cont' - Incline Village Water Disinfection Plant

Systems provide multi-barrier protection and reduce the risks against *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, and many other protozoan, bacterial, and viral pathogens. Sodium hypochlorite solution is used to provide a free chlorine residual within the drinking water distribution system.

Raw Water and Low Lift Pump Station

The Raw Water and Low Lift Pump Station convey raw water from Lake Tahoe through the Ozone and UV Disinfection Systems. Raw water is drawn from the lake through a 24-inch intake pipeline that extends approximately 650 feet from the shoreline into the lake. The Raw Water Intake pipeline is connected to the Low Lift Pump Station. The Low Lift Pump Station contains two adjustable speed submersible pumps with a maximum capacity of 3000 gpm each. The pumps are located inside a 12-foot diameter concrete caisson that serves as a wetwell to collect raw water from the Raw Water Intake. Raw water is pumped to the Ozone Eductor Vault prior to the Ozone Injection

System and Ozone Contactor. The raw water is pumped through the Ozone Disinfection System and UV Disinfection System. After passing through these treatment systems the water reaches the Treated Water Pump Station. The Treated Water Pump Station pumps treated water from the BCWDP to IVGID's distribution system. Sodium silicate is added to mitigate potential pipe and pipe joint corrosion issues within the water distribution system.

Ozone Disinfection System

The Ozone Disinfection System is comprised of a liquid oxygen (LOX) system, ozone generator system, ozone injection system, ozone contactor, and off-gas destruction units. The Ozone Disinfection System at the BCDWP generates ozone onsite using LOX. Ozone is highly reactive in nature and unstable at high concentrations which make delivery of ozone infeasible. The Ozone Disinfection System uses oxygen that is delivered as liquid oxygen, stored in two 3000 gallon vertical tanks located within the LOX Tank Vault, then converted to oxygen



Ozonia - Ozone Generator

Cont' on pages 4

Work It! Q & A

1. What is the BOD loading in lbs/day when the influent rate of flow is 6.7 MGD and the influent BOD is 195 mg/L?
2. An extended aeration plant has an influent flow of 4.3 MGD with a BOD of 164. If the F/M ratio is to be kept at 0.28 in two aeration tanks, each measuring 40 ft on each side and with a depth of 14 feet, what MLVSS concentration should be targeted?
- 2.a Using the situation from the above problem, how many pounds of MLVSS should be wasted today if the MLVSS is now 7,788 mg/L ?
3. Each clarifier is 40 ft in diameter, three are in service, influent flow is 15.8 MGD, and MLSS is 3,125 mg/L. What is the surface loading rate, gpd/sq ft. on these clarifiers?
4. What is the detention time used for CT determination in a thirty-five foot diameter clearwell tank with a T10/T Ratio of 0.1 when the minimum tank depth for the day was twelve feet and the maximum flow was 1.7 MGD ?
5. About how many fire hydrants will be installed in a system with 45,400 lineal feet of water mains over six-inches in diameter?
- 5.a If annual servicing of each hydrant requires an average of 115 minutes including preparation, travel and mobilization/demobilization times, and a full time work year is 2,080 hours, how many full time equivalent (FTE) employees will be needed for this work?

Answers to "Work It!" questions are on page 13

Cont' - Incline Village Water Disinfection Plant

gas (GOX) through two ambient vaporizers, and is transported via piping to the ozone generators. Dry nitrogen gas is added to the GOX prior to entering the generators to increase ozone production. Ozone is created by applying electrical energy across the GOX as it flows through the generator. The Ozonia Ozone Generators and corresponding control panels produce approximately 8 to 10 percent concentration of ozone gas (by weight) which flows through the ozone pipe to the sidestream Ozone Injection System located in the Ozone Eductor Vault. The injection system includes two Motive Water Pumps (one duty, one standby),

two Eductors (one duty, one standby), and one 24 inch Pipeline Flash Reactor. The discharge of the Motive Water Pump flows through an Eductor, pulling ozone gas into a sidestream of ozonated water (OW). The OW stream is then dosed to the raw water through the Pipeline Flash Reactor that is located immediately upstream from the 60-inch cement mortar lined and coated welded steel pipeline Ozone Contactor. Calcium thiosulfate (CT or Captor) is dosed approximately 4 feet downstream of the Ozone Contactor Sample 4 (OCS4) draw off location to quench (eliminate) the dissolved ozone in the OW. Ozone gas within the

Cont' on pages 5

Cont' - Incline Village Water Disinfection Plant

contactor is removed at Off-Gas Box No. 2 to the Ozone Destruction system. The dissolved ozone residual is monitored downstream at OCS6 sample location to confirm that all residual ozone in the process water is quenched.

UV Disinfection System

Ozonated water is conveyed from the Ozone Disinfection System to the UV Disinfection System through a 24 inch OW Pipeline. The UV Disinfection System includes two closed vessel model Sentinel* 18 by Calgon Carbon Corporation UV Disinfection Reactors (UVRs) and corresponding control panels. Each UVR (one duty, one standby) has a peak hydraulic capacity of 10 mgd. Automatic isolation valves, located upstream and downstream of each UVR, provide isolation of the standby reactor and to startup and shutdown the duty reactor. The UVRs are medium-pressure UV lamps enclosed in Type 214A quartz sleeves equipped with automatic mechanical quartz wiper cleaning devices to maintain a high degree of UV efficiency. There are two banks of two lamps for a total of four lamps per UVR. Each lamp has a maximum power capacity of 4.5 KW. An intensity sensor continually measures the absolute UV irradiance in the water to ensure adequate UV dose is maintained. The lamp banks energized and power can be adjusted automatically to accommodate varying conditions.

Treated Water Pump Station

The Treated Water Pump Station pumps treated water from the BCWDP to IVGID's potable water distribution system. The station consists

of three 400 HP and one 200 HP constant speed electric driven vertical turbine pumps positioned above an 18 feet diameter Treated Water Clearwell. The 400 HP pumps have a nominal capacity of 2400 gpm and the 200 HP pump has a nominal capacity of 1100 gpm. All four pumps are powered by reduced voltage solid-state motor controllers. A free chlorine

residual analyzer and pH probe are located on the pump discharge. The Treated Water is required to have a minimum of 0.2 mg/L free chlorine residual leaving the BCWDP. An online Raw Water Turbidimeter that draws water from the Low Lift Pump Station is located in the Treated Water Pump Station.



Cooling water pumps

Human Machine Interface

The computerized Human Machine Interface (HMI) controls all the processes in the BCWDP from the startup through the various operational modes through the shutdown of the system due to lack of need of water or emergency situation. The HMI is also linked to the Wastewater Treatment Plant telemetry computer and standby operator laptop for operator control and incident response.

Conclusion

The Burnt Cedar Water Disinfection Plant upgrade has been in operation for a year with no violations or breakdowns. The system will provide clean, safe potable water to our customers for future years as long as Lake Tahoe remains in its pristine state. The District spends considerable time and money on defensible space and watershed protection to keep the lake, our valuable water resource, so that we can all "Drink Tahoe Tap".

Kingsbury GID Water Meter Project

By: Eric Johnson, Kingsbury GID

Kingsbury General Improvement District is a small surface water system located on the south shore of Lake Tahoe, and it provides a number of services including water, sewer collection, and road maintenance to just fewer than 3,000 service connections. Most of these are residential, but there are a number of businesses, small and large as well. For many years, virtually all of the commercial accounts were metered, but essentially none of the residential. Residential customers paid on an equal flat rate basis, regardless of whether they were one unit in a four-plex with no irrigation, or an estate with extensive lawn and irrigation consumption.

There were many reasons to make the change to a metered system: having the ability to better determine condition of the distribution system by comparing accounted for water with total production; more equitable billing, as the majority of water was being used in the lower mountain area, while a large proportion of the population are in areas without much consumption; and perhaps the biggest of all, the requirement to be a metered system to be eligible for grant funding for water line replacement, something the District is in serious need of.

The District faced several challenges in starting this project. First, approximately one third of the services were in multi-unit, individually owned dwellings. These buildings were plumbed to a single District-owned valve, and then separated internally. These buildings are from 2 to 30+ units, and a large number are vacation rentals or second homes, which led to similar equitable billing questions for the people who live in the full time vs. those who don't.

The next challenge was a lack of reliable records. The best way to describe the history of the area is as a collection of individual developments, each with infrastructure put in by the developer. Some neighborhoods were fairly

well designed, and a few were part of a water company originally, but the majority has been acquired over the years. Records of many areas were sporadic at best, and in some places were nonexistent. There were a large number of valve locations recorded on 3x5 cards, but not all the properties had these, and some were found to be very inaccurate. More disturbingly, there were several properties that no one, not even the retired employees, had ever seen valves or services for.

The sheer size of the project was another issue, as the construction season in the Tahoe Basin is May 1 to October 15. All underground work had to fit into this period.

With that timeframe, and the large number of multi-family buildings, the District planned for a multi-year project, starting with the single family homes in 2010. One great unknown was the size of individual service lines. It was known that they ranged from $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 2", but not where the different sizes were, so the policy chosen was to match existing line size. Thus the contractor had to have a very large inventory of parts on hand at any given time. For the construction work, one water operator was assigned to the project, to handle shutdowns, turn-ons, and similar day to day tasks, as well as emergencies. In addition, other water operators tried to stay ahead of the project looking for missing service lines and/or valves, either with locating equipment or by using a Vactor truck to search. Kingsbury GID has five water operators, so with the routine day to day operations, this did strain the field resources.

The single family portion took approximately one full summer and a month into the next, and had 722 pit installations. Several factors contributed to the success of this phase. One was the use of Mueller meter pits, these allowed the installation of meters at the contractor's yard

Cont' on pages 7

Cont' Kingsbury GID Water Meter Project

as well as batch disinfection of the pits and meters. Another was the use of hydro-excavation trucks wherever possible, which minimized the size of holes, and reduced the risk of damaging water or other utilities. Another important technology for this project was the use of freeze tools for lines without operable valves.

The multi-family properties presented serious questions, first being whether to master meter the buildings or install meters for individual units. To do individual units would require the meters be installed inside the buildings in most cases, so on private property and into the customer's own plumbing. This of course brought up access and maintenance issues. Cost was another big factor, as installing the meters inside the homes would have to be done by a licensed plumber and there was the unknown of how long it would take to do a retrofit installation. There were many discussions, sometimes heated, on how to do this part of the project with all the issues. In the end the decision was made to offer residents the option of having individual meters, subject to the following criteria:

1. All owners of units in a particular building had to sign an agreement with the District, covering access to the meters, the responsibility of the owners to protect the meters from freezing and other damage, and the obligation of the owners to make any plumbing modifications needed for the installations.
2. Representatives of the District would visit all buildings where meters were to be installed internally to determine if the plumbing met requirements of: space (minimum 3' overhead clearance), access (direct access to the meters without having to go through any living space), constructability (18" of straight pipe, or the ability of the homeowners to have the necessary plumbing work done to create this), and no fixtures upstream of where the install would occur (irrigation systems

and drain valves were a nightmare for this).

The preparation for this took up thousands of hours of staff time, both in the office and for the water crew. Many buildings were inspected several times for feasibility of installation, first to determine what would need to be done, and then to verify that the prep work was done correctly.

The multifamily project got underway in May of 2011. Based on lessons learned from the prior phase, the method of inspection was changed to have one inspector covering internal installations and one for external. Each had a digital camera and a form to fill out for each location. Several photographs were taken per meter. External pits were essentially the same as the single family homes but with more complicated plumbing. Also there were many external pits which required hand excavation because of the lack of access for large equipment.



The internal installations began at the same time, and the key to being able to do these was the use of the Ford Kornerhorn system for retrofitting meters. This is a modular system which allows the use of locking ball valves, check valves etc. as needed; and they install into the existing piping by means of restrained

Cont' on pages 8

Cont' Kingsbury GID Water Meter Project

compression couplings. This eliminated the need for custom building meter setters by traditional pipe fitting methods. The time required to install the Kornerhorn is measured in minutes per fitting, and while they were not used in all of the internal installations they were the majority.

Total meters installed in the multifamily areas were 822, and ranged in size from ¾" to 6". The project went much more smoothly than anticipated and was completed by the end of September 2011. Again, one operator handled the day-to-day needs of the contractor, and others searched for any missing valves. One unpleasant surprise was the number of buildings which had white PVC service lines. These slowed down progress considerably both because of the dry time for adhesive and because extreme care had to be taken to not put stress on the pipe when connecting to the meter pits. Another difficulty we had was trying to figure out which line/valve/meter went to which unit in a multiunit building, as they were not always labeled and/or labeled correctly. We also found that the exterior addresses on several of the buildings did not match the District's records or billing system. All of this was compounded by the fact that a large number of the units were empty at the time of installation, so it took quite a long time, after the project installation, to assign the meters to the correct units.

In summary, some things worked very well:

1. Having one operator tasked with facilitating things for the contractor and also serving as an initial point of customer contact.
2. Using prefabricated meter pits but note:
 - a. Do not allow more than one 6" extension on a pit because any more makes removing the meters in the future difficult.
 - b. The "traffic rated" lids and collars may not stand up to snow removal, especially if the pits are for 1 ½ or 2"

meters. We wound up using actual manhole covers/lids on the larger meter pits.

3. Retrosetters, regardless of brand save time and money.
4. Hydro-excavating equipment was a much safer digging method. No utility lines were broken by the contractor.
5. Line freeze equipment was critical as the meters were going in either at property line/right of way or at the District valves. Sometimes valves were bad or simply non-existent at the meter location. Being able to do a freeze saved having to shut down whole areas of water main.

Things we would do differently:

1. Mark out sections or neighborhoods and have the contractor use them as scheduled work areas. We had a number of places where we had to locate valves and services, and at the start the contractor jumped around a lot, and it was hard to stay ahead with the locating effort. Part way into the first phase we did mark out areas by valve locations for shutdowns, and the contractor worked those areas one at a time, which went well.
2. Use GIS technology more. The inspection, location, meter data for the office and even photographs can all be captured with a good GPS or GPS-enabled computer. In our case, the meters have barcodes for serial and transmitter numbers, and the pertinent inspection information (meter size, depth, pipe type, condition, traffic rated lid or not, etc.) can all be entered with drop-down menus eliminating typos and time spent doing data entry.



TMWA's Truckee River Fund

By: Ron Penrose, Truckee Meadows Water Authority

The Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) is the primary municipal water supplier in the Reno-Sparks metropolitan area, serving a population of nearly 350,000 over a service area of 110 square miles. TMWA relies on surface water from the Truckee River system for the bulk of its deliveries, about eighty percent, with the remaining twenty percent coming from groundwater production wells utilized for peak demands and drought supply.

Like most water utilities, TMWA has implemented a water quality protection program encompassing all aspects of municipal water quality protection, including state-of-the-art treatment facilities, an aggressive program to maintain quality within the distribution system, a backflow prevention and cross-connection control program, and a source water quality program for its groundwater and surface water sources.

Prior to 2001, TMWA's predecessor, the water division of Sierra Pacific Power Company, had no feasible vehicle to proactively engage in surface water protection projects or programs covering such a wide multi-jurisdictional area as the Truckee River watershed. However, when the Truckee Meadows Water Authority was formed in 2001 as a public utility, an opportunity arose to create a program that could respond to this need. The answer, after much discussion and public input, was the TMWA Board of Directors' decision to create a 501c3 program that could be used for projects and programs to improve or protect Truckee River quality. The Fund was set up such that two percent of water revenue would be set aside for the fund with a third party utilized to invest and administer the funds. A separate advisory committee appointed by the cities of Reno and Sparks and Washoe County was established to solicit projects through an open and competitive

process on a semi-annual basis. Strict criteria must be met: direct benefit to water quality or watershed, and the dedication of matching funds.

Financially, the Truckee River Fund (the Fund) provides tremendous financial leverage for water protection projects that TMWA could not ordinarily afford or implement due to jurisdictional boundaries. To date the, the Fund has collaborated with other non-profit groups and public agencies to support 101 projects or programs, with a \$9.2 million contribution from the Fund matched by \$17.4 million from grantees. The Fund has supported projects in the following areas:

- **Wildfires and Forest Thinning:** Recent wildfires in the watershed surrounding Reno have taken their toll on the local watershed, thereby increasing the likelihood of additional sediment and turbidity loading to the river. The Fund has supported recovery and restoration efforts in these areas and has supported forest thinning designed to reduce the severity of forest fires that could have an adverse impact on water supplies. The Fund helped expedite recovery efforts for the recent Hawken Fire, Caughlin Fire and Washoe Fire.
- **Invasive Species:** The introduction and proliferation of invasive species, both land-based and aquatic, is a major concern to TMWA. As such, the Fund has supported projects to mitigate invasive weeds and has funded the development and implementation of watercraft inspection programs at Lake Tahoe and nearby reservoirs to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species, such as the quagga mussel into the waters of Lake Tahoe and other nearby reservoirs.

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Cont' TMWA's Truckee River Fund

- **Erosion due to Past Logging Operations:** Some areas of the bi-state Truckee River watershed have been adversely impacted by past logging practices that neglected reforestation and erosion control. As a result, some of these areas have experienced incising of tributary creeks which have impacted the river system with increased sediment, suspended solids, and TDS loading. TMWA, through the Fund has

supported many projects designed and constructed to restore streambeds and watershed to their natural state.

More information about the Truckee River Fund, including a full listing of supported projects, can be found at TMWA's website link at tmwa.com or by contacting Ron Penrose, P.E., TMWA Project Manager at rpenrose@tmwa.com.



Truckee River in the fall

The Need for Earthquake Vulnerability Assessments for Water Systems in Nevada

By: Ron Penrose, Truckee Meadows Water Authority

Within the State of Nevada, many public water suppliers are at risk for major system damage and loss of customer service in the event of a major earthquake. Northern Nevada, including the Reno-Sparks, Carson, and Lake Tahoe geographic areas, lies in a highly active seismic zone. As such, water system infrastructures in these areas are likely to sustain major damage if a major earthquake occurs. Given what is known about the local seismic zone, the occurrence of a large magnitude earthquake inflicting damage seems more of a question of when rather than if.

Some West Coast utilities with an inherent high seismic risk have undertaken detailed vulnerability assessments. These assessments have two components. The first component is an accurate delineation of the seismic area including identification of faults and areas of potential liquefaction, a seismic map if you will. The second component is a detailed analysis of the water system infrastructure within the seismic zones identified on the seismic map.

Because of the risk of earthquake damage, Nevada utilities should seriously consider undertaking earthquake vulnerability assessments of their respective systems. Due to this risk, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA), the primary municipal water supplier for the Reno-Sparks community, is in the process of completing a detailed earthquake vulnerability assessment. The assessment will include the following elements:

1. **Seismic Base Map:** TMWA, with assistance and information from the University of Nevada and the USGS, will prepare a geologic seismic base map delineating faults and potential zones of liquefaction. This

effort will draw upon existing studies and resources.

2. **Infrastructure Component Analysis:** TMWA staff will conduct an analysis and inventory of the various components of its system with a determination of infrastructure response and failure mode in the various seismic subzones. Elements to be reviewed in a layered methodology include distribution piping, pump stations, production wells, storage tanks, and treatment facilities.
3. **Identification of Resources Required for Response and Recovery:** This will be a specific detailed listing of materials, labor resources, equipment needs and other outside resources that should be readily available during the response and recovery efforts. This list will assist TMWA to better plan for response and recovery and will be shared with regional Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and local emergency response personnel.
4. **Development of Seismic Retrofit Plan:** This would be developed based upon the infrastructure analysis and would provide for a prudent, cost effective plan for hardening critical infrastructure against a major earthquake. The plan could then be incorporated into the overall capital improvement program.

TMWA hopes to complete the Earthquake Vulnerability Assessment in 2014. Questions concerning this effort can be directed to Ron Penrose, P.E., Project Manager, at rpenrose@tmwa.com.

Announcements

Obtaining Contact Hours and Continuing Education Units (CEUs) is a crucial requirement for every Water Operator that works in the State.

These classes allow Water Operators to further develop their skill levels, they will not only be better prepared to provide and protect safe drinking water, but will become more familiar with new developments in their field as technology and regulations change.

The NDEP's Bureau of Safe Drinking Water has a Calendar of Events for approved contact hour classes for certification renewal. The NDEP requires operators to take courses from International Association of Education Training (IACET) authorized providers or accredited colleges in order to apply for the Grade 3 & 4 exams.

Change of Mailing Address Requested:

Operator Certification Administrators have noted that a number of certificates are being returned to the State because Operators have not updated their mailing addresses after moving. Operators are asked to promptly notify the State when they have changed addresses. Please contact Susan Bunch with the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water at: susan_bunch@ndep.nv.gov or 775-687-9477

Wastewater Exam dates for 2014:

LV, Ely, Elko - 3/20/14 & Reno, NV only - TMWRF 3/21/14	Deadline - 2/20/14
NWEA Conf - 4/24/14 Reno, NV only	Deadline - 3/24/14
Exam date - 6/19/14	Deadline - 5/19/14
Exam date - 9/18/14	Deadline - 8/18/14
Exam date - 12/18/14	Deadline - 11/18/14

The next Drinking Water Exam:

March 21, 2014 (NvRWA conference) — Complete applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. on February 4, 2014 in our Carson City office. Test results will be mailed by the AWWA on or before April 18th. Certificates will be mailed on or before May 5th.

EXCEPTION: Testing that is proctored at the Las Vegas Valley Water District will be on Thursday, March 20th due to a scheduling conflict. Proctors will notify testers of exact locations and times.

Answers to the Work It! questions

1. Lbs / day = ppm x 8.34 x MGD

Lbs BOD / day = 195 ppm x 8.34 x 6.7 MGD

Lbs BOD / day = 10,896

2. **Known**

F/M ratio = BOD, lbs food / MLVSS, Lbs microorganisms = 0.28

Lbs BOD influent = BOD, mg/L x 8.34 x Flow, MGD

Lbs MLVSS = MLVSS, mg/L x 8.34 x Aerator tank volume, MG

Aerator tank dimensions, 2 each, (40 ft x 40 ft) and depth 14 ft

Influent flow, 4.3 MGD

Influent water BOD, 163 mg/L

7.48 gallons / cubic foot

Unknowns

MLVSS, mg/L

Solve

Lbs BOD = BOD, 164 mg/L x 8.34 x Flow, 4.3 MGD

Lbs BOD = 5,881

Aerator Volume = 2 x 40 ft x 40 ft x 14 ft x 7.48 gal/ cu-ft x 1 MG / 1,000,000 gal

Aerator Volume = 0.335 MG

F/M ratio, 0.28 = BOD, 5,881 lbs food / (MLVSS, Lbs microorganisms)

MLVSS, Lbs microorganisms to maintain = BOD, 5,881 lbs food / F/M ratio, 0.28

MLVSS, Lbs microorganisms = 21,005

21,005 Lbs MLVSS / (8.34 x Aerator tank volume, 0.335 MG) = MLVSS, mg/L

21,005 Lbs MLVSS ÷ 8.34 ÷ 0.335 = MLVSS, mg/L

7,518 = MLVSS, mg/L

2.a (7,788 mg/L now - 7,518 mg/L target) = need to waste an amount equivalent to 270 mg/L

270 mg/L x 8.34 x 0.335 MG = 754 lb MLVSS to waste

3. total flow to the clarifiers is 15.8 MGD, or 15,800,000 gallons per day

0.785 x 40 ft x 40 ft x 3 in service = 3,768 ft² surface area

15,800,000 gallons per day / 3,768 ft² = 4,193 gpd/sq ft.

4. [(0.785 x 35 ft x 35 ft x 12 ft x 7.48 gal/cu-ft) gal] x [1,440 min / 1,700,000 gal] x 0.1 = 7.3 minutes

5. Distance between hydrants is typically 400 feet, keeping hose rigging and friction losses in hoses reasonable.

45,400 ft / 400 ft per hydrant = 114 hydrants

5a. 114 hydrants x 115 minutes per hydrant service x 1 hour/ 60 minutes x 1 FTE / 2,080 hr = 0.105 FTE

3189

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DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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Water Lines

Winter 2013/2014

NV Water and Wastewater Operator's Forum Members:	Training Contacts
<p>Dale Johnson, Chair 775-340-8834 Elko Co Public Works - djohnson@ci.elko.nv.us</p> <p>Mike Ariztia, Vice Chair 775-673-2220 Sun Valley GID - mariztia@svgid.com</p> <p>Bob Foerster 775-841-4222 NvRWA - nvrwa@pyramid.net</p> <p>Harvey Johnson 775-832-1289 Incline Village GID - Harvey_johnson@ivgid.org</p> <p>Cameron McKay, 775-588-3548 Kingsbury GID - cam@kgid.org</p> <p>Dave Johnson 702-567-2051 Southern NV Water Authority - dave.johnson@snwa.com</p> <p>Lynn Forsberg 775-738-6816 Elko County Public Works - lforsberg@elkocountynv.net</p> <p>Tom Georgi 702-822-8026 Las Vegas Valley Water Dist - Thomas.Georgi@lvvwd.com</p> <p>Nathan Adams 775-962-5840 Pioche Public Utilities - pputilities@lcturbonet.com</p>	<p><i>Nevada Rural Water Association</i> videoconference classes for water system operators and managers are available in most communities. Please send requests for training to www.nvrwa.org or contact staff directly at 775-841-4222</p> <p><i>Community College of Southern Nevada Wastewater Water Technology Program</i> www.cleanwaterteam.com LeAnna Risso at 702-668-8487 or LRiso@cleanwaterteam.com</p> <p><i>WWET Training in Clark County</i> - www.wwet.org Training for water treatment and distribution system operators, wastewater treatment and collection system operators, and other professionals in these fields. Contact Jeff Butler 702-258-3296</p> <p><i>State of Nevada Water Certification Exams</i> Exam applications and fees are due to the State Bureau of Safe Drinking Water 45 days before exam dates. A proctor will contact examinees to schedule testing. Contact: Ron Penrose at 775-834-8017 for information about the exam dates. Additional information call: 775-687-9527 or http://ndep.nv.gov/bsdw/cert_home.htm</p> <p><i>Nevada Water Environment Association</i> - www.nvwea.org Jennifer McMartin (775)465-2045 or jenniferm@nvwea.org</p>

Maybe a little panic would be good for supply

Feb. 5, 2014 |

rgj.com

I'm writing about an with Bill Huack (TMWA senior hydrologist) on KRNV-TV. His contention is that we need not worry about a water shortage this year or, for that matter, for five years after that.

That is incredibly short-sighted since we live in the driest state. Tahoe is almost below the rim, and all the upstream reservoirs are very low. There's much demand on the Truckee below the Truckee Meadows, including the Fallon farmers and Pyramid Lake, as well, and those needs have to be considered. I know TMWA is counting on their numerous wells to carry them through, but don't forget they are recharged by the Truckee River.

We should always be conservation-minded and concerned about such an over-allocated resource. So, even though Mr. Hauck thinks "panic over what the summer will bring" is premature, maybe a little panic is good for our water supply.

Jim Greil, Washoe Valley

Appeals filed over Las Vegas rights to rural Nevada water

Written by Associated Press

Feb. 7, 2014 |

rgj.com

LAS VEGAS — The Southern Nevada Water Authority and Nevada’s state engineer are appealing a district judge’s ruling that rejected state approval needed for Las Vegas to draw water from rural valleys straddling the Nevada-Utah border.

The case that has been going on for decades now heads back to the Nevada Supreme Court for a second time after notices of appeal were filed Jan. 23, the [Las Vegas Review-Journal reported](#).

In December, Senior District Judge Robert Estes ordered state Engineer Jason King to reconsider his March 2012 approval for the Southern Nevada Water Authority to pump billions of gallons of groundwater a year from sites in White Pine and Lincoln counties.

Among other things, the judge ordered King to recalculate how much water is available in the Spring Valley, Cave, Dry Lake and Delamar valleys. He also said more hydrological studies were needed as well as standards for when mitigation is required to prevent environmental damage.

Estes faulted the underpinnings of King’s findings, including studies by the water authority, and pointed to the more than 20,000-square-mile projected pumping area.

Las Vegas’ main water source is Lake Mead, a reservoir on the Colorado River that has dropped to less than half-full because of ongoing drought in the Southwest.

The water fight between thirsty Las Vegas — home to 2 million people and host to 40 million visitors a year — and environmentalists and communities hundreds of miles away has been a decades-long battle and likely will be tied up in courts for years to come.

“It takes a long time to get through the state Supreme Court,” Susan Joseph-Taylor, King’s deputy administrator for water rights, told the Review-Journal.

Justices dealt the water authority a big setback in 2010 when they ruled the state engineer waited too long to act on dozens of water rights applications filed decades before. The court ordered new hearings on the applications, which were held over a six-week period in late 2011.

In March 2012, King granted the water authority permission to pump up to 84,000 acre-feet of groundwater a year from the four rural counties. An acre-foot is the volume of water needed to cover an acre of land with water 1 foot deep: about 326,000 gallons.

Opponents of the pumping then filed a new round of legal challenges to King’s ruling in state court, leading to the decision in December by Estes.

Drought thinning the herd of ranchers in Nevada

by [Steve Friess@stevefriess](mailto:SteveFriess@stevefriess) February 8, 2014

After three years of arid skies, the cow counties of the Silver State are drying up, and ranchers are selling out

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LOVELOCK, Nev. — After two punishingly dry years, nearly 2,000 cattle ranchers attending the annual meeting of the [Nevada Cattlemen's Association](#) piled into the ballroom last November hoping for good news from the keynote speaker, a meteorologist. Instead, as the weatherman warned that the region is in a 15-year drought cycle and that this winter was bound to be as bad as any, J.J. Goicoechea saw a roomful of grizzled, stoic men exchange panicked glances in stunned silence.

"There was a look of loss on everybody's faces," said Goicoechea, a [fourth-generation rancher](#) and a commissioner for Eureka County, in the north-central part of the state.

alt="Sierra Nevada, drought, Nevada, California, reservoir" class="">>



Source: National Resources Conservation Service Dave Meyers

The 39-year-old scanned the room, wondering what would become of the familiar faces whose businesses were already in precarious shape, thinking about the others not there who had always seemed like lifers until they sold out. The climate was thinning this herd too.

“That’s when I knew,” he said.

While the continuing epic drought in Northern California has alarmed many across the nation this winter, its devastating and potentially permanent impact on the Silver State has gotten far less notice. Nevada may be known primarily for gambling and tourism, but agriculture — in the form of cattle and alfalfa hay production in the northern, so-called cow counties — vies with mining as the No. 3 industry. The severely underwhelming snowfall so far this season threatens to further decimate it.

Across the vast high desert plains from the Lake Tahoe area to the Utah border, reservoirs are depleted; rivers and lakes are reduced to chalky, salty residue; and farmers who would be planting are staring with anger and angst at the clear, frustratingly silent skies.

“If we don’t get rain the next month or six weeks, there’s going to be herd liquidations,” said Monte Bruck, manager of the [Fallon Livestock Exchange](#), which holds a weekly cattle auction. “It’s going to be very severe.”



The sign for the Nugget Casino, near Silver Springs, Nev., stands out against bare mountains, which should be covered with snow this time of year. Tomo for Al Jazeera America

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CHAPTERS

2. 'They're on their knees'

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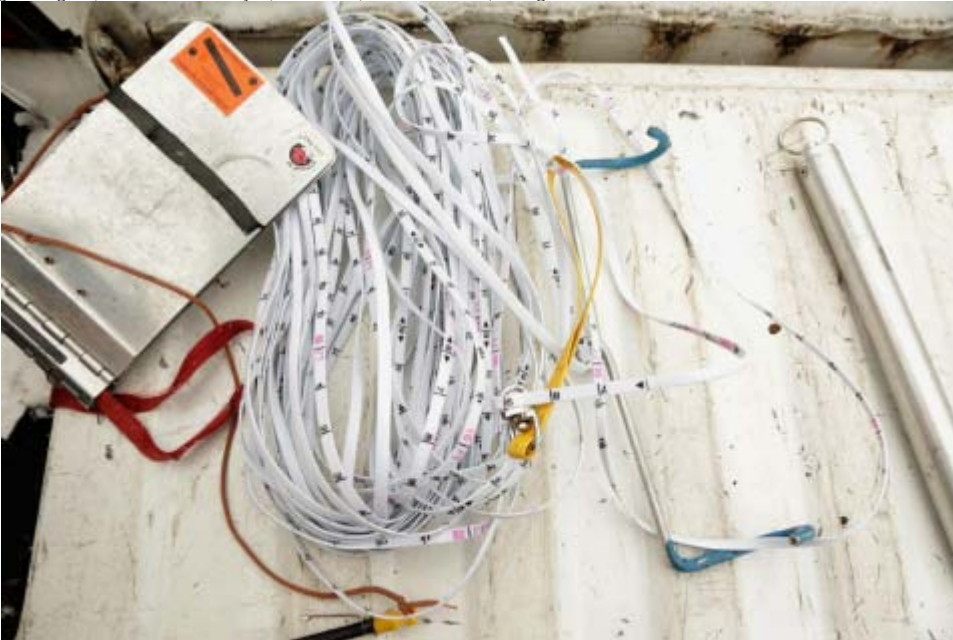
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Such liquidations, in fact, have been ongoing. The state's beef herd is the lowest in the nearly 80 years of record keeping, down to 345,000 heads, according to the Nevada Department of Agriculture. In the 1980s, the figure was as high as 1 million.

Goicoechea Ranches, for instance, sent 100 of 700 mother cows to slaughter last year in anticipation of not having proper water or grazing ranges to sustain them, Goicoechea said. He expects the state to lose another 10 percent of its cattle this year to sell-offs and moves; ranchers who can afford to may move their herds as far as Nebraska.

Cattle ranching "won't come back, and it can't," he said glumly. "I don't know what happens to these ranches. Maybe they'll be bought up by larger corporations. I honestly do believe family ranching operations take better care of the resources."



Some of the gear used by the chief snow surveyor for the California Department of Water Resources to measure snow depth and weight. Tomo for Al Jazeera America

Unlike usually verdant California, droughts come and go in Nevada. This one, however, is especially difficult because this is the third exceptionally dry year in a row, depleting stored water and thrusting fallow fields into long-term crisis, experts say.

"This has been three of the driest years in recent decades, and they've been consecutive," said Bill Patzert, an oceanographer based in Pasadena, Calif., [who develops climate forecasting technology](#) for NASA. "Nevada is always on the cusp of disaster, water-wise. Everything is in the open range, so they're on their knees. If there's no rainfall, there's no grass. Everything is so crispy."

Drought is defined, of course, by its numbers — and these are exceptionally brutal. The most recent measure of the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada, conducted Jan. 30 by the California Department of Water Resources' chief snow surveyor, Frank Gehrke, found just 12 percent of what's normal. As a result, various Nevada basins that are fed by the Sierra snowpack are as low as 15 percent of the average.

Across Nevada, the flow into the Humboldt River from the Ruby Mountains that ring Elko is equally meager. At the Rye Patch Reservoir near Lovelock, for instance, dam operator Joe Karr said last week that, for the first time in the reservoir's nearly 80-year existence, there might be no water released downstream. Normally by early February, water laps at the sides near the top of the dam, but this year the concrete floor of the dam's lock is merely spotted with a few modest puddles.

If Karr's prediction holds — and climatologists expect the next months to be just as parched — 2014 will be a total loss for many.

"That means we won't have any crop," said Dan Knisley, owner of the 3,000-acre Great Basin Farms near Lovelock. "We'd have whatever God would provide for with rain in the summer. We'd have no grain crops, no wheat crop. Some marginal alfalfa will die out."



Frank Gehrke, right, chief snow surveyor for the California Department of Water Resources, measures the snow at Echo Summit in the Sierra Nevada, Jan. 30, 2014. Tomo for Al Jazeera America

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3. Hunkering down

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Ann Lattin, 68, married to Rick Lattin, whose family has worked the 400-acre [Lattin Farms](#) in Churchill County, 50 miles east of Reno, for more than 60 years, said the family is already expecting to reduce hiring this year.

"Well, we're pretty nervous," she said. "Rick and I have retirement we live off of, but we have people who depend on us for a living. During the harvest, we're up to 30 to 40 employees, but we couldn't plant anything in the fall. We usually plant winter rye or wheat ... We're really hunkering down."

The Rye Patch Reservoir is the centerpiece of a popular [state park](#) and recreation area, but its boat launch stands high and dry at least 15 feet above the water line. The speed at which the level fell has stunned Park Ranger Josh Ivins, who took the job in 2010 when the reservoir was just 3 feet below of capacity.



The nearly depleted Rye Patch Reservoir, outside Lovelock, where the boat launch now stands 15 feet above the water. Tomo for Al Jazeera America

“Where the ramp is, there was water,” Ivins said. “It is kind of shocking to see that much water go in couple of years. And this is really the only lake up here that’s really got a lot of water left in it.”

Oddly, the drought is barely felt in northern Nevada’s urban hub, the twin cities of Reno and Sparks, where [Truckee Meadows Water Authority](#) officials boast that their customers probably won’t have any water restrictions to contend with, thanks to a series of reservoirs and private water rights that can keep up the flow.

“We’re vastly different than the water utilities in California,” TMWA senior hydrologist Bill Hauck said. “We’ve been reading news reports about what’s going on just over the hill in California with [water restrictions](#), but we have a lot of built-in redundancy. If this current dry spell continues, we’re full prepared to handle it. Right now, we’re not asking the customers to do anything differently.”

Hauck said there’s little the city can do for the nearby farmers and ranchers, but Goicoechea disagreed. Some of the water that the TMWA slurps up comes from the same sources — Lake Tahoe and Sierra runoff — he said.

Goicoechea, a former president of the state’s cattlemen’s association, said it’s a bit jarring to contemplate city dwellers going on as usual while crops die, cattle herds are thinned out, ranchers go bankrupt and wildfire dangers surge.

“As farmers and ranchers are going under, people in Reno will still be able to wash their cars, and the fountains will still go on in town,” he said. “We should all be in this together.”

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Las Vegas Sun
February 10, 2014
49° | Mostly Cloudy

A red advertisement for the 2014 Subaru Outback 2.5i. It features a white SUV on the left. Text in the center reads: "\$269/Month Lease a 2014 Outback 2.5i for \$269/month for 36-months. 12,000 miles per year." To the right is the "THE SUBARU True Love EVENT" logo with a heart icon. A "Disclaimer" link is in the top right, and a "View Dealer Inventory" link with a right-pointing arrow is at the bottom right. The car is labeled "The 2014 Outback 2.5i" at the bottom left.

The Subaru logo (a blue oval with six stars) and the word "SUBARU" in bold. Below it is the slogan "Confidence in Motion". Further down is the contact information for Subaru of Las Vegas: "Subaru of Las Vegas 5385 West Sahara Avenue (702) 495-2100 SubaruOfLasVegas.com".

The Sunday editorial:

Whatever it takes to bring water to valley
Sun, Feb 9, 2014 (2 a.m.)

Pat Mulroy retired Feb. 6, leaving a long legacy as head of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Mulroy helped create the authority in 1991, and then found ways to provide the water that fueled Las Vegas' explosive growth.

A tireless advocate for Southern Nevada, Mulroy negotiated creative deals to maximize Las Vegas' water supply from the Colorado River, which is the source of about 90 percent of the region's water. And that wasn't an easy task.

The laws that regulate the Colorado River are stacked against Nevada; they were written nearly 100 years ago when Southern Nevada's population was counted by the hundreds, not the hundreds of thousands. But Mulroy and her staff found ways to maximize water from the Colorado through conservation efforts and smart agreements that continued to keep the water flowing.

Mulroy not only has provided water but also has provided a strong vision for years to come. There are still serious challenges ahead for her successor, John Entsminger.

Entsminger, who served as Mulroy's top deputy for several years, is well prepared and versed on what lies ahead. The drought on the Colorado River continues to take its toll, leaving a precarious future for Southern Nevada. With water levels continuing to drop at Lake Mead, there is a very real concern that the region's main water supply could dry up.

Entsminger will have to press ahead on a plan put together by Mulroy that has attracted significant opposition. Mulroy proposed building a 300-mile pipeline to carry water from rural eastern Nevada to Las Vegas.

The plan recently suffered a setback when a judge in White Pine County overruled state approval that gave the authority permission to pump some water. The case is on appeal, and hopefully, the state Supreme Court will see the folly in that ruling. Clark County accounts for nearly three-quarters of the state's population, and it drives the economy. Anything that harms Clark County harms the state itself. And there aren't many real alternatives to the pipeline.

The state could cap growth in Clark County, but that would effectively cap the state's economic growth as well.

But critics of the pipeline plan say it is unnecessary. They maintain that the water authority could increase conservation efforts, and while that certainly could help, it won't provide enough water, especially if Southern Nevada's take from the Colorado River is limited.

Pipeline opponents also have suggested that the water authority pursue a proposal to build desalination plants along the Pacific Ocean in California. Under such a plan, the water authority would give California the water from the desalination plants in exchange for keeping the same amount of water, which otherwise would go to California, in Lake Mead for our use. Although that might be an idea worth exploring, it's not one to go all in on. If California agreed to the deal, it would be expensive to build and operate the plants. There also are significant environmental issues that go along with a desalination plant that would need to be worked out.

But more importantly, the desalination proposal would further tie Southern Nevada's future to the Colorado River. With the continued drought, and California Gov. Jerry Brown declaring a drought emergency, don't expect Nevada to get more water from the Colorado; California certainly will be flexing its muscle for it.

The answer for the state is simple: a pipeline to rural Nevada. That will have to be more than Mulroy's legacy; it will have to be Entsminger's top priority.

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Pat conniff

16 hours ago

Absolutely correct. Northern Nevada will not become a desert. What a bunch of selfish hoarders. Southern Nevada has cut water use enormously over the past several years, despite the growing population. Conservation is hardly making a dent. The pipeline is not a want, it's a need.

Like Reply



Summerof69

19 hours ago

What water shortage ? We have all these golf courses, two water parks, and gondola boat rides in the desert. What water shortage ?

2 Like Reply



RobMrowka

19 hours ago

Have Sun has joined its mad cousin in the looney bin. HELLO! We live in the driest desert in North America, why wouldn't we limit growth? Also, why wouldn't we fight like crazy to have the outdated and fundamentally flawed law of the river. And if you have drunk SNWA's poison kool-aid and believe we are doing a great job of conservation, think again. Studies have shown 170 gals per person a day is not unreasonable- the savings from the current 220 gals/ day could support reasoned growth. And in a couple of decades when de-salted water is needed it will be pumped from the coast using solar power.

2 Like Reply

stopthebs

19 hours ago



[@RobMrowka](#)

Water pumped from the coast by solar power from a solar powered desalination plant sounds very doable. The water will be pretty pricey but given the alternatives it will still be a bargain.

[Like](#) [Reply](#)



[AudreyJohnson2](#)

21 hours ago

No, no, no!!!!!! You cannot have a sustainable economy when one area is destroyed to bolster another. You simply cannot turn northern Nevada into a desert just to please a county growing in a desert. There needs to be a control on growth because there is a finite amount of water. A pipeline to northern Nevada would just remove the water from a semi-arid area to feed an arid area. Northern Nevada is also in drought. They don't have the water to spare. The pipeline would take way more water than can be replaced with rainfall. That water took thousands of years to accumulate. The pipeline would remove hundreds of years of accumulation of water in just one year of pumping. That water will quickly fall below the level of sustainability of the area. Wells will go dry, plant life and wildlife will disappear. Why in the world did Clark county allow TWO water parks when we are hurting for water. The amount of water that evaporates will be tremendous. The county needs to do better planning for the use of water we already have. There needs to be a moratorium on new buildings until all the currently empty buildings are used. We don't need more buildings when there are so many sitting empty. New buildings put more stress on a system already stretched beyond belief.

2 [Like](#) [Reply](#)



[PaulRupp](#)

2 days ago

"Whatever it takes..." Until Clark County implements serious water conservation plans the rest of Nevadan's who also depend on a finite supply of potable water disagree with the theft of Nevada's most precious resource. Golf courses, Water Theme Parks, Casino Fountains...if this is all grey water being used why not recycle it for a more productive better use? Apparently LVS Editors advocate and endorse Mob Rule or >> "Tyranny of the majority-where decisions made by a majority place its interests above those of an individual or minority group , constituting active oppression comparable to that of TYRANTS and DESPOTS" <> source - Wikipedia

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Theuxdu|#3/#5347

Weekend storm's water content a 'game changer' for Sierra Nevada

By Jeff DeLong
jdelong@rgj.com

The weekend storm that plastered the Sierra with rain and snow was no drought buster but it did go a long ways toward helping out, producing bountiful water during a winter of otherwise profound dryness.

"It was a game-changer," Chad Blanchard, federal water master, said Monday as experts tallied up the totals for rain and snow.

The numbers are impressive. Lower-than-expected snow levels piled up the white stuff, with Mount Rose/Ski Tahoe reporting a weekend storm total of 4 feet of fresh snow and Kirkwood Mountain reporting an overall storm total of nearly 7 feet at the resort's summit.

At Tahoe City, 4.41 inches of rain or melted snow fell over a 24-hour period from Saturday to Sunday — the most ever for a storm that didn't result in a flood, Blanchard said. More fell there during a single day in 1950, 1955, 1963, 1964, 1997 and 2005, with each of those events associated with a significant or major flood in the Reno-Tahoe area. Over the course of the entire weekend, Tahoe City received 6.3 inches of precipitation.

Lake Tahoe rose nearly 5½ inches over the course of the two-day storm, mostly from rainfall directly on the lake surface. That's 53,000 acre-feet, or 17.2 billion gallons, of water. It's roughly the equivalent of one and a third Boca Reservoirs.

The snowpack in the Truckee River Basin jumped from 16 percent of normal for the date last Friday to 35 percent on Monday while the Lake Tahoe Basin's went from 26 percent to 53 percent, in both cases more than doubling. Atop Echo Summit and Squaw Valley, liquid water content from rain and feet of heavy, wet snow was measured at 12 inches.

Facing what looks to be a third dry winter in a row, there's little doubt that this storm was of huge benefit, Blanchard said.

"We're still extremely dry, still way behind, but it's a great start to what could hopefully be a turn-around," Blanchard said. "This really changes what water we will have to work with this summer."

More precisely, the water master's office should now be able to maintain court-mandated flows of the Truckee River sometime into the summer. Flows had been projected to peter out much earlier before the storm hit, perhaps not reaching desired levels at all this year.

"We'll have a normal river for at least part of the summer," Blanchard said.

The next possibility of more rain or snow arrives with a system expected Wednesday into Thursday, with another shot at showers possible next weekend. In both cases, however, most of the storm energy is expected to hit well to the north of the Reno-Tahoe area.

The good news: That stubborn ridge of high pressure that shunted aside Pacific storms through much of December and January is not, at least at this point, showing signs of rebuilding, said Dawn Johnson of the National Weather Service in Reno. That could leave the door open for more storms.

Last weekend's storm was enough to push the amount of precipitation as measured in Tahoe City to more than an inch above average for the month of February, meaning anything else that comes this month could be considered as something of a bonus.

"Anything else we get will go to eating away at the deficit we have," Blanchard said. "We're in a big hole but at least we're on our way out."



Theuxdu|#9/#5347

Water wars: Rancher wants \$9.6M for water rights; county says it's a bad bet

A longtime rancher wants Washoe County to buy his water rights for \$9.6 million. County staff says that's a bad bet

By Anjeanette Damon

Reno rancher Bob Marshall has some water to sell, and Washoe County Commissioner Bonnie Weber wants Washoe taxpayers to buy it.

It's an odd time for the county to be buying water.

- The county doesn't have any specific use for these water rights, particularly since development ground to a halt in the recession. Nor does the county have a pot of money to spend on it.
- The water is underground in Dry Valley — an uninhabited expanse of sagebrush and junipers north of Reno. No infrastructure exists to pump it out of the ground and transport it somewhere for use.
- The county is exiting the municipal water business anyway as it pursues a merger with the Truckee Meadows Water Authority to take over service to its 57,000 water customers. So it doesn't really need to be banking water.
- And, unlike water purchases the county has made or attempted to make in the past, the Dry Valley groundwater has never been proven. It's never been put to use for agriculture, ranching or municipal purposes. All that exists is a series of tests and studies estimating the amount of water that resides underground, and the experts disagree on how to interpret them. The county staff says the water isn't there. Other scientists estimate a range that is dependent on how quickly the groundwater can be recharged during normal weather conditions.

None of that concerns Weber. She is pushing the county commission to take Marshall up on his \$9.6 million deal.

"I just think it's the right thing to do," Weber said. "Water is the lifeblood to our community."

The proposed deal itself stems from a decades-long battle between Marshall and the multimillion-dollar Vidler Water Co., which vied to sell water to Lemmon Valley during the construction boom. Vidler won that battle, and now Marshall needs to figure out what to do with his water.

Weber's aggressive push to buy the water has opened a rift between some county commissioners and county staff, which has long been skeptical of Marshall's project and has routinely pushed to scuttle it.

Weber views the water as an asset for the county — an investment to hold on to for a time when it could be needed. When developers again come knocking, for instance, or a groundwater basin somewhere needs recharging.

Her ally on the commission, Chairman David Humke, agrees.

“It could be for a lot of things,” he said. “Could be agricultural. It could be residential. There might be a new town in Warm Springs or Dry valley. We may need it for fire protection.”

The pair echo the sales pitch Marshall has been delivering to county commissioners.

Marshall is adamant that it's a good deal for the county — a deal that will keep intact the 3,400 acre-feet of groundwater he's spent two decades assembling in the hopes of selling it to developers during the boom.

Indeed, the sales price he is offering the county is literally pennies on the dollar compared to what he might have sold the water for just 10 years ago.

“If something were to happen to me, there's no doubt many people would start filing on these water rights, and they would be lost to the citizens of Washoe County,” he said.

“This is an investment for Washoe County.”

Or, it could be a bailout for a water project Marshall was never able to make good on.

‘There was a need’

Marshall's water project has a storied past.

In the late 1990s, when developers had designs on building a sea of homes in the North Valleys, no more precious a commodity existed than water.

The Truckee River couldn't sustain all of the proposed development. Established groundwater basins were being tapped out. Red tape had scuttled the most ambitious of water importation projects from Honey Lake.

And so the scramble for water was on.

For those who could deliver the water, the fortunes could be instant. Water rights were fetching anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000 an acre-foot.

In 2005, when Washoe County auctioned off 174 acre-feet of water rights, it brought in an average of \$40,492 an acre-foot. (One acre-foot of water is roughly enough to supply two single-family homes for one year.)

At that rate, Marshall potentially could have made \$136 million on his Dry Valley water.

But it didn't quite work out that way.

Marshall arrived in Reno in 1958 as a young lawyer with dreams of being a rancher. He eventually bought his ranch in Warm Springs Valley, where he and his son, Tom Marshall, run cattle.

When the water wars began for supplying developers in the North Valleys, Marshall thought he would be able to export water from his Warm Springs ranch. As he was putting that project together, an engineer suggested he take a look at water in neighboring Dry Valley, Upper Dry Valley and Beddell Flat.

“We found out there weren't any permits out there,” Marshall said.

The county wound up prohibiting the export of water from the Warm Springs Basin. So Marshall focused even more on filing for the Dry Valley water.

“Sometimes I get the feeling people think we’ve done bad things trying to take water into Lemmon Valley,” Marshall said at a commission meeting last month. “I don’t think we did. There was a need.”

But as Marshall was putting together his project — applying for water permits with the state, drilling wells, conducting environmental assessments, cobbling together rights of way across federal land, obtaining special use permits — he was up against another company doing pretty much the same thing.

Vidler Water Co. had assembled water rights in Fish Springs Ranch even farther north of Reno and raised the capital for a 28-mile pipeline to feed the water to Lemmon Valley.

Marshall’s project essentially fell flat.

An unfinished project

At 80, Marshall has a mind like a steel trap, instantly recalling names, dates and figures from decades ago. He has dancing blue eyes, a witty charm and is always ready with an entertaining story to tell about old-time Reno, fast cars and that randy bull that almost broke out of the back of his 1931 pickup truck in downtown Los Angeles.

Beyond his perpetually friendly demeanor, however, Marshall has a bubbling frustration over his water project. He does his best to keep it under wraps.

But he said he’s put a lot of time and effort into assembling the water rights, which had the potential to be very lucrative for him and his family.

Along the way, he has jumped through bureaucratic hoops at the county, state and federal level. In 1997, his project was approved as a preferred way to provide water to the North Valleys by the Regional Water Planning Commission. And in the most recent water management plan, the Dry Valley water is identified as a source to help Cold Springs with its water needs in the future.

While Marshall is loath to express his frustration, he notes that he wants to see the project through in his lifetime.

“I hate to tell you this, but a clock does run on a person’s life,” Marshall said. “I’m 80 years old. I don’t want to leave my family with an unfinished project.”

Tom Marshall doesn’t work as hard to keep up a veneer of diplomacy. In his opinion, the county and its staff have kowtowed to Vidler Water — a multimillion-dollar subsidiary of a giant holding company that has invested heavily in lobbying local government to see its project through.

The Marshalls, by contrast, he says, are local ranchers who have done their best to give back to the community.

“We’re just two local guys with a little bit of water to sell,” Tom Marshall said. “We don’t have the money to go schmooze the commissioners. We can’t afford to pay all those lobbyists, and I don’t like them, anyway. I think they’re a waste of money.”

And, it’s not like the county has never bought water off a rancher before, Tom Marshall said during a recent tour of five test wells the family has drilled to help prove the water resource.

In fact, in 1987, the county bought the surface water rights in Dry Valley from rancher Dalton LaRue.

The babbling brook runs right over the top of the Marshalls' groundwater.

"The county bought the LaRues' water," Tom Marshall said, standing on the edge of the small creek in Dry Valley. "Why can't they buy ours?"

Water wars

Vidler won the North Valleys water war. Many county officials point to the Vidler project as an example of how water deals should be done.

The private company invested its own money — up to \$100 million — to both assemble the water rights and build the infrastructure for piping it to Lemmon Valley.

That infrastructure has been deeded to Washoe County, which now is responsible for its operating and maintenance costs. And only Vidler water can flow through the pipe.

To date, no water has actually been imported for sale. The same recession that robbed Marshall of the chance to make good on his water rights halted demand for Vidler's water, too. But the company stands ready to sell it once demand resumes, and the infrastructure is already in place to deliver it.

As a point of almost unbearable irony for the Marshalls, Vidler's pipe runs right over the family's water rights. Connecting to the pipe would be a potentially easy endeavor.

But it can't happen now under the terms of a settlement with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, which had sued the Bureau of Land Management over the right of way granted to Vidler for the pipeline.

In the early days, Bob Marshall said, he tried on multiple occasions to strike a deal with Vidler, but terms could never be reached.

He doesn't have the capital to build a pipeline for his water. And he knows the pipeline price tag — anywhere from \$20 million to \$50 million — is enough to make taxpayers balk. So he focuses his pitch on the fact Washoe County can simply hold on to the water rights until a need arises.

"We went through the recession — I call it the depression — and that hit us. We haven't been able to do anything with (the water)," Marshall said.

'Bob Marshall called me'

This isn't the first time Marshall has tried to sell the water to Washoe County.

In 2012, he made a \$9 million pitch to the commission. His pitch went nowhere in the face of significant opposition from county staff, which raised concerns about the amount of water that's actually underground in Dry Valley.

The subject has been studied ad nauseum. Analyses date back to the 1960s and include various models for estimating how much water seeps into the ground and is stored each year. To help the research along, the Marshalls built five test wells, running 10-day pumps to better establish the potential yield.

According to the early models, the groundwater is recharged at a fast enough rate to yield the 3,400 acre-feet Marshall has permits for. But in 2008, an independent review by Earth Knowledge concluded "there is insufficient data to make an informed decision on the availability of ground water."

Further, the quality of the water was called into question, with findings of arsenic and a pH-level above allowable levels for drinking water. That's not unusual for the region, which has to treat or blend water from multiple sources to achieve healthy limits.

In light of those concerns, the county passed on Marshall's offer.

But now, with one new commissioner on the board, and new staff leading the county's water resources division, Marshall has decided to make another go of it.

In September, with the help of Weber and Humke, Marshall convinced the county to spend \$25,000 on yet another independent assessment of the water.

The county hired Mike Turnipseed, the former state engineer. Asked how he came by the contract, Turnipseed answered: "Bob Marshall called me."

Turnipseed reviewed all of the past studies and concluded Marshall's proposal is a "great opportunity for Washoe County."

"The water rights are reasonably priced," Turnipseed wrote. "At least five scientists, some of the best in the world, have studied the basins, and all indications are that the water is there."

The appraisal that Turnipseed provided with the report valued the water rights at \$7.2 million — \$2.4 million below Marshall's offer.

Turnipseed also concluded his report with a sales pitch of his own, offering to help the county keep the water rights in good standing with the state engineer and facilitate any attempt to re-permit the water for use outside Lemmon Valley.

As for the Earth Knowledge study that recommended further modeling, Turnipseed concluded, "We don't have that luxury here" and said the past studies are valid.

That finding is contested by Washoe County's former hydrogeologist Dan Dragan, who wrote a letter to commissioners opposing the purchase.

"Every professional report I've read about this project, based on my 30-plus years' experience as a hydrogeologist, leaves strong doubts about the value of Dry Valley water rights," Dragan wrote. "Most studies and reports state there are not enough data to conclude the aquifers can produce water in the quantity and quality necessary for a good municipal water supply and in amounts consistent with (Marshall's) permits."

Vahid Behmaram, Washoe County's current water rights manager, also raised significant concerns about the availability of the water.

But Weber has dismissed those concerns and has accused county staff of bias.

"I don't want to say I know more about water than the people who work for Washoe County, because I know they do know it," Weber said. "But at some point in time, you have to look at, are there other issues our staff is dealing with? Could they be partisan, if you will, to not wanting the water for a particular reason?"

Weber declined to be more specific in describing staff's motivation for opposing the purchase, adding that "our staff have been fighting Mr. Marshall for many years."

Washoe County Manager John Slaughter disputed that staff has a bias.

“Certainly our staff has had numerous years that they’ve either followed this or had the opportunity to review proposals,” Slaughter said. “I don’t know that I am aware of any particular bias. I would hope that staff is providing the information and then letting the policymakers make the decision on the policy direction they want to go.”

While Humke and Weber have championed the idea, other commissioners are skeptical.

Commissioner Vaughn Hartung said he can’t justify spending \$9.6 million on a “speculative” asset with no immediate purpose and no identifiable return on investment when the county is facing so many other needs in the wake of the recession.

“The county, first of all, is not really in a position to make these kinds of long-term investments, and if we were going to spend this kind of money, I personally see a higher need,” Hartung said. “Everything from the detention facility to senior services and all points in between.”

Commissioner Marsha Berkgigler raised a similar point.

“Where would the money come from?” Berkgigler said. “We are doing well, but we are not fully recovered and we have lots of things we need to do with the money we do have.”

Marshall said he is sympathetic to the county’s financial needs. He has asked for a down payment of 7.5 percent and is willing to finance the balance over 10 years at a 5 percent interest rate.

Weber has no suggestions for where the county would find the money.

“I don’t know. Staff is supposed to be answering that,” Weber said.

Humke said he would suggest using money the federal government pays the county in lieu of property taxes. That is estimated to be about \$3 million a year.

But Slaughter said that money is already included in the general fund budget. If the county used it to buy water rights, it would have to offset it with a “revenue increase or an expenditure decrease” somewhere else.

Additional Facts

Bob Marshall’s offer

By the numbers

Bedell Flat:

368 acre-feet

Lower Dry Valley:

2,000 acre-feet

Newcomb Lake:

200 acre-feet

Upper Dry Valley:

932 acre-feet

Price:

\$2,760 per acre-foot

Terms:

\$725,000 down; five equal payments over 10 years of \$1.8 million; 5 percent interest paid monthly

Appraisal value:

\$2,100 per acre-foot

Amount county paid Mike Turnipseed for most recent analysis:

\$24,999

Source: RGJ research

Editorial: Purchasing water rights on spec makes little sense

Feb. 18, 2014 11:22 PM |

rgj.com

SNAPSHOT

ISSUE: Water rights
OUR VIEW: For the county to purchase unproven rights with no plan for how they'll be used or what the ultimate disposition will be is irresponsible.

With no plan in place for holding water rights or even any idea what the county would do with the water rights from Dry Valley that it's been offered for \$9.6 million, the Washoe County Commission should turn down the offer.

Money is tight, the market for water rights is at a longtime low, development has slowed to a trickle and the county has been planning to get out of the water business by merging its water utility with the Truckee Meadows Water Authority. Buying the water rights, which have yet to be proven, doesn't make sense for the county at any level, and that's what the county staff has been trying to tell commissioners.

Yet Commissioner Bonnie Weber has pushed ahead with the plan as an investment in a precious resource that should be held onto, at taxpayers' expense, until perhaps developers come calling again.

It's a bad idea.

Weber is right about the importance of water rights, of course. Unlike Southern Nevada, where utility officials have to cast far and wide to provide water for approved development, in Northern Nevada, water rights come first. To obtain service from TMWA, a developer has to provide the utility with sufficient water rights to serve the development (plus additional water rights to allow TMWA to store water for drought years).

In the boom years, the price of water rights increased to staggering heights, anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000 per acre-foot. When the boom went bust, so did the market for water rights. If real estate takes off again here, water rights may rise, too, but today that's just speculation.

That's especially true for the water rights that the county's been offered in Dry Valley. There's an old saying in the West: A water right isn't wet. Whether the rights in Dry Valley are wet appears to depend on whom you ask.

Mike Turnipseed, former state engineer who was hired by the county to assess the water rights that are up for offer, wrote, "At least five scientists, the best in the world, have studied the basins, and all indications are that the water is there."



California farmers won't get federal water

Posted: Feb 21, 2014 12:22 AM PST

Updated: Feb 22, 2014 4:20 PM PST

By SCOTT SMITH
Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - Without a lot more rain and snow, many California farmers caught in the state's drought can expect to receive no irrigation water this year from a vast system of rivers, canals and reservoirs interlacing the state, federal officials announced Friday.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation released its first outlook of the year, saying that the agency will continue to monitor rain and snow fall, but the grim levels so far prove that the state is in the throes of one of its driest periods in recorded history.

Farmers who rely on the federally run Central Valley Project received only 20 percent of their normal water allotment last year and were expecting this year's bad news. Some communities and endangered wildlife that rely on the federal water source will also suffer deep cuts.

The state's snowpack is at 29 percent of average for this time of year, which means that for farmers it's going to be a hard year.

"My gross sales are probably going to be cut in half," said Bill Diedrich, who farms 1,500 acres of almonds, tomatoes and other crops in the parched Central Valley community of Firebaugh. "Some farmers out here are going to lose everything they've got."

Gov. Jerry Brown last month declared California's drought emergency, and both state and federal officials have pledged millions of dollars to help with water conservation and food banks for those put out of work by the drought.

California officials who manage the State Water Project, the state's other major water system, have already said they won't be releasing any water for farmers, marking a first in its 54-year history.

In 2009, the dry weather caused federal authorities to announce many Central Valley farmers would receive no water, but the wet weather that followed moved that up to 10 percent. Ryan Jacobsen of the Fresno County Farm Bureau said no Fresno County farmers were spared of bad news this time, marking a sad historical first. Fresno County leads the nation in agriculture production with \$6.6 billion in annual economic activity.

There's still time for the situation to improve. By late Wednesday, the National Weather Service expects a storm to sweep through the region bringing significant showers. The weather is expected to break Thursday with rain continuing Friday and Saturday. The state needs a succession of storms dumping mountain snow, said Pete Lucero of the Bureau of Reclamation. "Rain is nice, but snow is where the money is," he said.

Gayle Holman of the Fresno-based Westlands Water District, the nation's largest supplier of water for agricultural use, said she fears farmers will be stuck with no increases to the federal water distribution. The district had been preparing farmers for Friday's announcement.

"They're all on pins and needles trying to figure out how they're going to get through this," Holman said, adding that Westland's 700 farmers will choose to leave fields unplanted, draw water from wells or pay top dollar for water that's on the market. "We would need those buckets of rain now."

Farmers are hit hardest, but they're not alone. Contractors that provide cities with water can expect to receive half of their usual amount, the Bureau said, and wildlife refuges that need water flows in rivers to protect endangered fish will receive 40 percent of their contracted supply.

Contractors that provide farmers with water and hold historic agreements giving them senior rights will receive 40 percent of their normal supplies. Some contracts date back over a century and guarantee that farmers will receive at least 75 percent of their water.

One of those is the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority in Los Banos that provides irrigation for 240,000 acres of farmland.

The Water Authority's executive director Steve Chedester said farmers he serves understand that the reality of California's drought means it's going to be tough to find enough water for them. "They're taking a very practical approach," he said. "If it's not there, it's just not there."

Jung, Schieve considering runs for Reno mayor

Written by Ray Hagar

Feb. 23, 2014 9:31 AM |

rgj.com



Reno City Hall

A NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The Nevada Supreme Court decision upended the political landscape in the Reno mayor's race. Here's a look at how the pieces are landing:
WHO'S TERMED OUT
Dave Aiazzi
Dwight Dortch
Jessica Sferrazza
Sharon Zadra
WHO'S IN
Eddie Lorton
Chuck Reno
WHO MIGHT JUMP IN
Marsha Berkgigler
Oscar Delgado
Dan Gustin
Neoma Jardon
Kitty Jung
Hillary Schieve
WHO HAS SAID NO TO RUNNING
Jenny Brekhus
Richard Gammick
Valerie Glenn
Mike Haley
Ben Kieckhefer
Sheila Leslie
Rick Reviglio
Filing for Reno mayor starts March 3 and ends March 16. The primary election to narrow the race to two candidates, should more than two enter the race, is June 10.

Kitty Jung, the only Democrat on the Washoe County Commission, said Saturday she is seriously considering running for mayor, and Reno Councilwoman Hillary Schieve, a registered nonpartisan, said she's also seriously thinking about the job.

The race was thrown open after the Nevada Supreme Court ruled Thursday that termed-out city council members may not run for mayor. It sunk the campaigns of current Councilman Dwight Dortch and former Councilwoman Jessica Sferrazza. Both had been organizing campaigns and raising money.

Termed-out City Council members Sharon Zadra and Dave Aiazzi, now a Washoe County School District trustee, were also considering running for mayor.

Jung told a large crowd at the Washoe County Democratic Caucus meeting that she could either run for mayor or run for re-election to the commission. After the meeting, she said she'd been urged to run for mayor.

"I am the only Democrat on the Washoe County Commission, so I am your only voice there," Jung said to the crowd at Wooster High School. "But there is also this little mayoral race where there is also a little pressure (to run) as well. So I will keep you posted and you will be the first to know."

Schieve said she was considering running to bring a progressive voice to the post.

Filing for office for the 2014 general and primary elections opens March 3. Jung said she needs to talk to many people before making a decision.

"There are other Democrats that have shown interest in it," she said. "So there would certainly be some artful negotiations and crunching of numbers. But I want to keep my options open, always."



Theuxdu|#58/#5347

Steve Driscoll selected as Sparks city manager

By Marcella Corona
mcorona@rgj.com

Sparks City Council members on Monday chose Steve Driscoll as the new city manager to replace the retiring Shaun Carey in a 4-1 vote.

Driscoll and Neil Krutz, deputy city manager for community services, were the only two candidates applying for the job. No outside candidates were interviewed by the council.

"It is difficult to make a choice today but I don't think I can make a bad choice," Mayor Geno Martini said during the council meeting.

"These guys are great employees, and both are my friends," Martini, who did not have a vote.

Krutz was disappointed but he told council members he was not going to "pick up my toys and go home."

"I'm in a situation where if I don't get the job, I'm not going to quit," Krutz said.

Councilman Ed Lawson cast the dissenting vote.

He favored Krutz as city manager but said he's certain Driscoll will do a great job.

"I wanted to show some support for Neil," Lawson said. "Obviously, I was the lone supporter, but I look forward to working with Steve for hopefully eight years or more."

Driscoll, who has worked with the city of Sparks for 20 years, was appointed as assistant city manager in 2000.

"I'm very honored to be asked by this council to be their next city manager and to help them move to the next chapter," Driscoll said, "to help them with their goals and objective and to help them move the city along and be a city of choice for people to live here, to work here and to bring their businesses."

His goals as city manager include filing a budget for Sparks by June 1 and to prepare Sparks to meet the state's regulations for operating medical marijuana dispensaries within city limits.

"We'll also be discussing the medical marijuana dispensaries and growing issues and do the work that's necessary as we get close to the April 1 state deadline," Driscoll said.

He is expected to assume his new duties in early April. His salary is being worked out. He can earn up to \$196,227.20 annually as city manager.

As assistant city manager, his current duties include working with the Carey, Martini, council members, city department heads and Sparks residents for the city's daily operations.

He also helps operate departments including Community Services, Parks and Recreation and the fire and the police departments.

“We need to be the community of choice from top to bottom,” Driscoll said during his interview. “We need to be the place where people want to live because this is the place businesses want to be.”



Theuxdu|#57/#5347

Two storms line up to hit Reno-Tahoe with needed moisture

By Jeff DeLong
jdelong@rgj.com

Springlike weather should give way to a return of winter this week with two storm systems streaming toward the Reno-Tahoe area with the promise of rain and mountain snow.

While the storms look nowhere near as strong as the one that brought major snow and rain during the second weekend of February, they do offer welcome precipitation during a third dry winter in a row, experts said Monday.

"Considering how dry it's been this winter, this will be a couple of nice systems for us," said Dawn Johnson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Reno.

The first Pacific storm should arrive late Wednesday afternoon, bringing snow to the Sierra through Thursday and rain to the Reno-Sparks area on Thursday.

Twelve to 18 inches of snow is expected along the Sierra crest from the first storm, with Lake Tahoe likely to get 3 to 6 inches. Snow levels could lower to 5,000 to 5,500 feet Thursday morning, making for a potentially slippery commute, Johnson said.

The second storm is expected Friday into Saturday. While stronger than the first, that storm appears steered more to the south, potentially limiting the amount of snow falling in the Lake Tahoe area. Much of the storm's precipitation could be shadowed by the Sierra, lessening expected impact to Reno-Sparks.

"It's very clear we're going to have something, it's just where the heaviest stuff will fall," Johnson said. "There's more moisture, it's just a matter of where it goes."

Anything that comes is welcome after a dry December and January left the Sierra starved for the snow so crucial to the area's water supplies.

The powerful storm that hit the region the weekend of Feb. 8 doubled a meager mountain snowpack and dropped enough moisture into Lake Tahoe to raise the lake level by 5 1/2 inches, adding some 17 billion gallons of water.

Since then, the improved snowpack has melted significantly. On Monday, the Lake Tahoe Basin's snowpack was at 41 percent of normal for the date, while the Truckee River Basin's was measured at 30 percent.

"We're still way behind and there's probably no way to catch up but this does help us," said Federal Water Master Chad Blanchard. The Wednesday-Thursday storm alone is expected to raise Lake Tahoe's level by about an inch, Blanchard.

Every bit of water that does come with late-season storms and is stored in Tahoe helps increase the likelihood that desired flows of the Truckee River can occur longer into the summer, Blanchard said.

“Anything we can get now helps us get closer to that,” he said.

While confidence is low, longer-term forecasts project the possibility of a third storm impacting the area Sunday night into Monday with yet another moist storm possible around Wednesday, March 5.

Additional Facts

Reno area forecast

Tuesday: Sunny, high 66, low 41.

Wednesday: Chance of showers, rain late, high 61, low 38.

Thursday: Chance of showers, high 54, low 37.

Tahoe area forecast

Tuesday: Increasing clouds, high 54, low 36.

Wednesday: Rain/snow, high 47, low 33.

Thursday: Chance of snow, high 40, low 30.

Source: National Weather Service.



Theuxdu|#58/#5347

Commissioners showed own bias

By Dan Dragan

Commissioner Bonnie Weber stated I have a “bias” against the Intermountain Water Supply proposal to sell Washoe County water rights for millions of dollars **[RGJ, Feb. 16]**.

For 24 years with Washoe County, my job was to ensure that groundwater rights dedicated to the county by developers represented a sustainable source of water supply. I performed that job without bias. The job always required rigorous demands on those wishing to develop the resource. The end result in all cases was that the rights had to be backed up by drilling, construction and testing of “production” wells (wells that will actually be used as a municipal supply source).

The IWS project is based on “predictions” from exploratory drilling and testing. It is like only being able to test drive a car at 20 mph and “predicting” it will be able to go 200 mph in a race. In this case, the county will buy the car for approximately \$10 million and will not know if it will perform as promised until the money is spent.

Most of the scientific studies for the project ignore the “capturability” of groundwater. The basins may contain the groundwater predicted but do not address whether it can be reasonably captured to meet the demands of a municipal water supply. Imagine a bathtub filled with coarse gravel topped off with water. A single straw in the bathtub could easily drain the water because it would move quickly through the gravel to the straw (extraction well). Now picture the same bathtub filled with clay. Water would move slowly to the straw, and any attempt to withdraw the water too quickly would result in the straw “sucking air.” You would either have to wait for the water to slowly seep toward the straw before pumping again or install straws throughout the bathtub to extract the water. The IWS project never demonstrated the reasonable “capturability” of the water as a municipal supply.

IWS is selling “permits.” Permits are like a hunting license for water. There is no guarantee a permit will result in “bagging” the game, in this case, the water. The IWS permits have never been put to beneficial use. This means the predicted groundwater has never been pumped for any beneficial use like growing a crop or supplying water to a house. Proving the permits will become an expensive responsibility for Washoe county.

I found it interesting how a consultant, called by Bob Marshall (IWS), according to the RGJ, was selected as the county-paid consultant to evaluate IWS rights at the September Commission meeting. Carefully watch the discussion at that meeting and try and convince me Commissioners Weber and David Humke had not prearranged the selection with IWS. That would suggest to me those commissioners may have entered the meeting with their own bias.

Dan Dragan is a former hydrogeologist for Washoe County.

Snowstorm moving toward Sierra

Feb. 25, 2014

An approaching storm is prompting a winter weather advisory for portions of the Sierra where up to 18 inches of fresh snow is forecast in the upper elevations.

Peak snowfall is expected between 10 p.m. Wednesday and 4 a.m. Thursday, the National Weather Service said in a statement.

“Snow will create hazardous driving conditions across all Sierra passes with chain controls and delays likely,” the weather statement said. “Chain controls are also possible in the Tahoe basin Wednesday evening and Thursday morning.”

Some details the weather service’s advisory that’s in place from 4 p.m. Wednesday to 10 a.m. Thursday:

- snow accumulations of 3 to 6 inches at lake level
- 10 to 18 inches forecast above 7,000 feet.
- snow levels projected at 6,500 to 7,000 feet Wednesday afternoon, dropping to 5,000 feet by around midnight.

The advisory covers the greater Lake Tahoe area and Mono County, including the cities of South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Bridgeport, Mammoth Lakes and Incline Village.

Rain is forecast for the Reno area.

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Theuxdu|#59/#5347

California committees approve \$687 million in drought relief

By FENIT NIRAPPIL, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A \$687 million drought relief plan is headed for floor votes in the Legislature after winning quick approval Wednesday in legislative committees.

Assembly and Senate budget committees passed the bills, a week after the package was announced by Gov. Jerry Brown and the Democratic legislative leaders. California is facing its driest year on record, putting 17 communities at risk of running out of drinking water while forcing farmers in the nation's agricultural heartland to fallow fields and uproot orchards.

The legislation calls for immediate action on the drought, including \$15 million to address emergency water shortages and an additional \$1 million for a public awareness campaign. Most of the money comes from bonds previously approved by voters and will accelerate existing or planned water conservation and recycling projects.

Both houses of the Legislature are expected to vote on the drought legislation Thursday. If Brown signs the bills, as expected, they would take effect immediately.

AB 79 makes changes to the state's 2013-14 budget, creating grant programs for agencies and local governments to bid for project funding. Some specific projects received more funding, such as an additional \$25 million in bond money for Folsom Dam modifications.

"I imagine we'd walk right into a veto if we added any earmarks," said State Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco.

Republican lawmakers have raised concerns about how quickly the legislation is moving and pointed to language in AB 80 they say could affect existing water rights.

"In the rush to do it, and to do it now, I think we need to be careful not to do it recklessly," said Assemblyman Jim Patterson, R-Fresno, at a committee hearing.

Assemblyman Richard Bloom, D-Santa Monica, countered that the package was thoughtfully put together.

"This is an emergency," Bloom said. "We do need to move forward quickly to address this very, very real crisis."

Under the legislation, the State Water Resources Control Board would have new powers to issue fines for illegal diversions of water. The bill was amended in the Senate to stave off fines for unintentional diversions, calming some Republicans concerns.

Representatives of the governor's administration say existing water rights laws will not change, and that the new powers are only in effect during the state of emergency.

Republicans also questioned the Democrats' plan to tap \$40 million from a fund created for projects

that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Under a landmark program, California businesses pay for emissions and the state is supposed to use the money to fight climate change.

"This is beginning to look more and more like an executive slush fund," said Patterson, who proposed drawing the money from the general fund, the state's main checkbook.

The governor's office says water efficiency and energy efficiency go hand-in-hand. For example, the State Water Project, which supplies 25 million Californians and 750,000 acres of agricultural land, is the state's largest energy user.

The legislative package also will draw \$47 million from the state's general fund to provide food and housing assistance for Californians hit hardest by the drought, primarily in regions heavily dependent on agriculture. Some Democratic lawmakers raised concerns about whether that would be enough.

"It's a pittance," said Sen. Jim Beall, D-San Jose.

The independent Legislative Analyst's Office released a report Friday laying out options for lawmakers to immediately address the drought. Several are included in the relief package, including expanding groundwater management and conservation programs.

But lawmakers would also reduce water consumption by requiring rate hikes, the report says. Legislators can update the state's water rights system by allocating water based on assumptions including that farmers are using water-efficient technology and that homeowners are using low-flow shower heads. These approaches, likely to be controversial, are not included in the relief package.

To meet Californians' long-term water needs, lawmakers are negotiating changes to an \$11.1 billion water bond scheduled to go before voters in November. Republicans are emphasizing dams and reservoirs to increase water storage, while Democrats focus on making more use of existing water and restoring watersheds and ecosystems.

Legislative leaders expect a negotiated bill to come together by early summer.



PDF# /#5347

When it comes to Truckee River reservoir system water, 'master' calls the shots

By Jeff DeLong
jdelong@rgj.com

If one were to say Chad Blanchard keeps track of every drop of water between Lake Tahoe and the lower Truckee River, it wouldn't be far from the truth.

Blanchard is the federal water master — the fifth man to hold the job since its creation nearly 90 years ago — and as such, he is tasked with keeping track of all the water contained at any given time within the Truckee River reservoir system.

It's important during wet years, when flooding can loom as a threat. And it's important during dry years like this one, when the always-precious resource that is water becomes particularly critical.

"We're the only one like it in the country," Blanchard said of the water distribution process established by a federal court order in 1926 as a means to help end rancorous legal disputes over water supplies and to manage water in Lake Tahoe and the Truckee and Carson rivers.

Born and raised in Lovelock, Blanchard waited several years after graduating from high school before deciding to attend college, employed at the time as a highway worker and truck driver. Those first classes at Truckee Meadows Community College would eventually spark a passion for higher education, with Blanchard graduating through a hydrology scholarship from University of Nevada, Reno in 1994, followed by a master's degree in resource applied economics in 2004 and a master's in business administration in 2009.

Blanchard, 47, has worked in the water master's office for more than 20 years, rising through the ranks from field hydrologist to chief hydrologist to chief deputy water master. He was named water master in 2012 after the retirement of "a wonderful mentor and friend," former water master Garry Stone.

The job is essentially a complex balancing act, carefully laid out in detailed court decrees, that involves managing water levels and releases at four Sierra reservoirs — Tahoe, Boca, Stampede and Prosser. At any given time, floodgates in the system's dams might have to be opened or closed to achieve targeted releases of water.

Blanchard and colleagues work to ensure, as much as is possible, that everyone with entitlements to water contained in the reservoir system gets the water they need and when they need it. Those include municipal water providers, such as the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, which serves tens of thousands of homes and businesses in the Reno-Sparks area and farmers irrigating crops around Fallon.

Blanchard's office works with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe to ensure adequate water is sent downstream for threatened and endangered fish in Pyramid Lake. It must ensure there's enough water to serve hydroelectric plants operating along the river.

Every day, Blanchard is in contact with the tribe and water authority, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Truckee-Tahoe Irrigation District and other entities to track where water is being stored and where it must be sent.

All are involved in the complex dance of distributing Truckee River water.

"We try to figure out where we are and where we need to be," Blanchard said. "Every day, potentially there are different targets that have to be met for flows in the river and storage in the reservoirs. If those targets are not being met, we have to make adjustments. There can be multiple changes throughout the day.

"That's what the job is; it's all over the place, and there's a lot going on at any one time," Blanchard said.

Communication is constant when juggling available water, said Bill Hauck, water supply coordinator for the Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

"We coordinate just about everything we do with his office," Hauck said. "When he makes adjustments in river flows, we need to know."

Everyone cares about this water, and it's not uncommon for Blanchard's office to get sometimes unusual requests over what to do with it. Calls demanding more water for commercial rafting are fairly common, especially when river flows are low. There was also a time they were asked to release more water for a rubber duck race in the river.

Once, during a wet year when Lake Tahoe was lapping at particularly high levels, an anxious bride-to-be called the water master's office. She had heard from her hired photographer that the beach where her wedding was planned was disappearing beneath rising waters.

Couldn't enough water be released from the lake to ensure her wedding could continue as planned, she asked.

"A lot of times, it's one group asking for one thing and another group asking for the opposite," Blanchard said. "But we have to do what we have to do. The rules are the rules."

Reno mayor's race: Who's in, who's out, who's thinking about it

Mar. 2, 2014 8:27 PM | 0 Comments

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Reno City Hall on April 16, 2010 / Marilyn Newton/RGJ file

A look at candidates and potential candidates for the Reno mayor's race:

Who's running: Marsha Berkgigler, Eddie Lorton, Chuck Reno.

Who might run: Barry Breslow, Oscar Delgado, Dan Gustin, Neoma Jardon, Kitty Jung, Hillary Schieve.

Who has said no: Jenny Brekhus, Richard Gammick, Valerie Glenn, Mike Haley, Ben Kieckhefer, Sheila Leslie , Rick Reviglio

Who can't run (term limits): Dave Aiazzi, Dwight Dortch, Jessica Sferrazza, Sharon Zadra

ADVERTISEMENT



100,000 fish die in northern Nevada marina after mysterious drop in oxygen levels

[Scott Sonner](#) / The Associated Press

January 15, 2014 03:12 PM



Joggers and dog-walkers make their way around the Sparks Marina, Wednesday Jan. 15, 2014 in Sparks, Nev. State wildlife biologists are trying to figure out what caused the kill-off the man-made lake's entire stocked fishery an estimated 100,000 trout, bass and catfish. The 77-acre marina sits in an old rock quarry along U.S. Interstate 80 just east of Reno. (AP Photo/Scott Sonner).

Joggers and dog-walkers make their way around the Sparks Marina, Wednesday Jan. 15, 2014 in Sparks, Nev. State wildlife biologists are trying to figure out what caused the kill-off the man-made lake's entire stocked fishery an estimated 100,000 trout, bass and catfish. The 77-acre marina sits in an old rock quarry along U.S. Interstate 80 just east of Reno. (AP Photo/Scott Sonner).

SPARKS, Nev. - State wildlife officials are trying to figure out why all the fish have died in a northern Nevada marina where the stocked fishery has flourished since the man-made lake was created nearly 15 years ago.

An estimated 100,000 trout, bass and catfish have died over the past month in the Sparks Marina along U.S.

Interstate 80 east of Reno, apparently the result of a dramatic, unexplained drop in dissolved oxygen levels, Nevada Department of Wildlife spokesman Chris Healy said Wednesday.

Scientists say a bitter cold snap could have caused oxygen-poor waters to rise from the old rock quarry's bottom to the surface, but they don't understand what sparked the massive die-off.

Fish biologists confirmed low oxygen levels caused the death of an estimated 3,000 fish in one corner of the lake in mid-December, but Healy said they thought at the time that the event was localized and of limited impact. Since then, they've been unable to detect any live fish in the 77-acre lake. Numerous dead fish have been removed from the lake's shoreline, and Healy said it's likely the rest sank to the bottom.

"The 100,000 dead fish figure is something that is probably a pretty conservative guess," said Healy, who estimates they've stocked close to 1 million adult fish in the lake since they started in 1998.

"We don't know if any small fish have survived, but for all intents and purposes, the fishery doesn't exist anymore," he told The Associated Press.

The Reno Gazette-Journal first reported scientists determined the problem was much more serious than they realized after a boat survey on Monday found dissolved oxygen levels far too low to support the fish at 11 different sampling locations. Readings from an electronic fish-finder also revealed no fish swimming in the lake's depths.

Lakes like the marina consist of different layers of water temperatures, with the warmest water on top holding the highest oxygen content, Healy said. He said one theory is that the surface water may have chilled very quickly, sank toward the bottom of the lake and stirred up material on its floor, causing a "violent turnover" that could have sucked up additional oxygen.

"Everything is a theory right now," Healy said.

Sparks city spokesman Adam Mayberry emphasized there's no health or safety threat at the marina. He said the water typically is of good quality and no similar problems have occurred before.

"Even with the biological anomaly we are seeing, it's still a very safe body of water," he said. "You just can't fish in the marina right now because there aren't any fish there, and we are trying to figure out why."

The Sparks Marina opened in 2000, with a 2-mile walking and bike trail, beaches, playgrounds, picnic areas and a fishing pier. The former aggregate pit operated by Helms Construction Co. had been found to be contaminated in 1988 by pollutants leaking from an adjacent tank farm, but state environmental officials said all the pollution had been cleaned up before a 1997 New Year's Day flood sent Truckee River waters into the pit.

Michael Drinkwater, manager of the Truckee Meadows Wastewater Reclamation Facility which collects water from the lake, is awaiting results of new toxicity tests conducted last week but said routine testing has revealed no problems before.

"There's no obvious indication hydrocarbon pollution could be associated with the die-off," he told the Gazette-Journal.

Healy said testing earlier this week found dissolved oxygen levels in the range of 1.1 to 1.9 parts per million. Fish do best with levels in the range of 7 to 9 parts per million and typically can't survive when it drops below 5 parts per million, he said.

The department annually stocks the marina in late February or early March 1, but he said they won't be doing that this year unless the dissolved oxygen level "makes a big recovery."



Mdxdu | #19/#5347

Forecast suggests dry conditions into spring, drought disaster declared

By Jeff DeLong
jdelong@rgj.com

Hope that a wet winter turnaround could ease worsening drought conditions across the Reno-Tahoe area was diminished with a long-term forecast released Thursday by government experts that predicts warmer and drier conditions will persist into spring.

Below-average precipitation and higher-than-normal temperatures are likely in February, March and April, according to the U.S. Climate Prediction Center. The forecast was released the same day that parts of Nevada joined areas in 10 other states as primary natural disaster areas due to drought, with Washoe County identified by the Department of Agriculture as one of the affected counties in the worst shape.

To the south outside Los Angeles, a wind-whipped wildfire Thursday chewed through tinder-dry brush, destroying at least five homes and providing a worrying example of the type of dangerous fires increasingly possible if dry conditions persist.

And there's not a whole lot of reason to expect they won't, experts said.

"It looks like for the next 90 days, we're going to have more of the same," said Anthony Artusa, a meteorologist with the Climate Prediction Center. "It's going to be very hard to get any decent rainfall or snowfall."

The forecast for coming months comes after a dry December was followed by a dry first half of January, with a massive high pressure ridge parked over the West likely to shunt storms to the north for the foreseeable future. The mountain snowpack in the Truckee River Basin Thursday was only 19 percent of average for the date.

"What we're seeing meteorologically is a blocking pattern that is deflecting all the storms," said Brian Fuches, a climatologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center. "There really hasn't been a lot of indication that this pattern is breaking down."

With little precipitation falling since the official start of the water year Oct. 1, this could become the driest four-month start to the water year in the history of the Sierra, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. If the entire winter remains dry, it would be the third in a row.

The Department of Agriculture Thursday designated parts of 11 drought-ridden western and central states, including Nevada and California, as primary natural disaster areas. The designation means farmers can qualify for low-interest emergency loans from the government.

In Nevada, counties named as primary disaster areas were Washoe, Clark, Lyon, Nye, Churchill, Lander, Mineral, Pershing and Humboldt. Adjacent counties —Douglas, Carson City, Storey, Esmeralda, Lincoln, White Pine, Eureka and Elko — also are eligible for drought-related assistance. So are the border California counties of Placer, Nevada, Sierra and Lassen, among others.

The timing of current weather conditions is particularly unfortunate after two back-to-back dry winters, Artusa said.

"It's hitting at a time hopefully the Sierra is building up its snowpack but it just doesn't seem to be happening," Artusa said. "This is hitting at a critical time — the height of the rain season for the West. That makes it particularly problematic."

In Glendora, Calif., outside Los Angeles, a wildfire pushed by Santa Ana winds chewed through dry brush and forced evacuation of nearly 2,000 people. The fire started just four days from the second anniversary of the Washoe Drive Fire south of Reno.

That Jan. 19 fire, also fueled by drought-dried brush and pushed by high winds, blasted through 3,100 acres, burned down 28 homes and killed an elderly woman.

"It's not as dry as then but it is pretty darn close," Charles Moore, chief of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, said of existing fuel conditions.

Should another fire start under windy conditions, a repeat of that winter wildfire could occur, Moore said.

And a dry forecast doesn't bode well for the coming summer.

"It doesn't look good," Moore said.

Additional Facts

MOUNTAIN SNOWPACK

Truckee River Basin: 19 percent of average.

Lake Tahoe Basin: 26 percent of average.

Carson River Basin: 28 percent of average.

Walker River Basin: 19 percent of average.

Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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Road Conditions

Nine Nevada Counties Declared Natural Disaster Areas

Posted: Jan 16, 2014 4:29 PM PST

Updated: Jan 16, 2014 6:34 PM PST

Agriculture is Nevada's third biggest industry, behind mining and tourism.

But after two years of drought, farmers and ranchers are feeling the impact.

Last year, Nevada exported more than \$500 million worth of ag products.

"Some of our Timothy Hay and alfalfa gets exported all over the world," Clint Koble, State Executive Director for the USDA said. "We have some huge cattle operations here. We've got some of the largest onion producers in the nation here. Some of the largest potato producers here."

Some farmers have seen their production nearly cut in half, with some getting just 10% of their normal water allotment.

Bob Jones is a contract farmer that has seen it all over the state.

"It's dramatically less," Jones said. "Lovelock's a good example and you go down to Yerington. And if you don't have the snowpack, you don't have the water to put on the field."

All 17 of Nevada's counties are eligible for federal assistance because of the drought.

The nine Nevada counties include Clark, Washoe, Lyon, Nye, Churchill, Lander, Mineral, Pershing and Humboldt.

Douglas, Esmeralda, Lincoln, White Pine, Elko, Eureka, Storey and Carson City are also eligible because they are adjacent to the primary counties.

The designation means farmers and ranchers qualify for low-interest emergency loans from the agriculture department, at 2.875%.

The money can be used for a variety of operating costs.

"No matter how tough it's been for them, they have a great track record of paying back all of those loans," Koble said. "Even if the tough times. Hopefully, we can help them to stay on top and keep going until things turn around for them."

Nevada's livestock population has dropped about 30% in the last two years because of water supply.

Jones says the lack of water is keeping grasses from growing on range land, and that affects wildlife and cattle.

"There's a lot of people that turn cattle out for feed and if you don't have feed, you can't turn cows out," Jones said. "They have to have something to eat."

Officials say it's extremely important that these emergency loans are available because there is still no farm bill in place.

Congress could pass one within the next month.

Written by Paul Nelson

Additional programs available to assist farmers and ranchers include the Emergency Conservation Program, Federal Crop Insurance, and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

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TMWA: Area Water Supply Okay for Now

Posted: Jan 17, 2014 6:33 PM PST
Updated: Jan 17, 2014 6:33 PM PST

Washoe County was one of nine Nevada counties included in U.S. Agriculture Department's Natural Disaster Designation for drought Thursday. So, we talked with experts today about their concerns for our municipal and industrial water supplies for both the long run and the short run.

You don't have to look far to see that it's been a pretty low water year. Like other reservoirs in the area, Boca is low.

And while **TMWA** always encourages its customers to use water wisely, they are a long way from restricting water use. "Conditions hydrologically are not good. But we have a nine years' drought supply. When you add up Boca, Stampede, Independence and the rest and we're just three years in and if we have to, we could handle another six years," says Bill Hauck, TMWA Senior Hydrologist.

Hauck adds that high desert like this is used to wet and dry cycles. So panic over what the summer will bring is a little premature.

You could say he's more of a 'the reservoir is half full...kind of guy.' "We're only halfway through the winter and we could get another big snow. I've seen big snowfalls into May, so I'm not ready to write off this winter just yet."

And while the long term concern is not there, yet, there is some concern for the short run, when it comes to our trees.

"Whenever we have a dry spell like this where we haven't had moisture for weeks at a time it's necessary to water trees and lawn and all of your plants in general," says Steve Packer of **Moana Nursery**.

He says since we are expecting more days of springlike weather, his advice is to water once it's 40 degrees out or warmer - and turn off the water and drain the system before it has a chance to freeze.

But he says once every two or three weeks should do it. "Here I am...it's winter and I'm in short sleeved shirts, the weather's nice, it's good for us, but not for the plants."

So, wait until it warms up to 40 degrees in the middle of the day - and give those yards and trees a drink. And while agriculture is already struggling, the situation for municipal water and for industry is good.

Written by Erin Breen

January 16, 2014 - RENO, Nev. — Today, the Department of Interior honored U.S. Geological Survey biologist Gary Scopettone and his colleagues for helping land managers save two species of fish from extinction. The species of unique desert fish, Cui-ui and Lahontan cutthroat trout, are considered sacred to the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe of Nevada.

USGS biologists are being awarded a 2013 Partners in Conservation Award for their work to recover the full assemblage of fish native to the Truckee watershed in California and Nevada. Since 1981 USGS scientists under the lead of Gary Scopettone have worked to provide the science that has allowed the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to recover the endangered and tribally sacred desert fish.

"The Department of the Interior is proud to recognize the accomplishments of those who are innovating and collaborating in ways that address today's complex conservation and stewardship challenges," Secretary Jewell said at an awards ceremony at the Interior headquarters in Washington today. "These partnerships represent the gold standard for how Interior is doing business across the nation to power our future, strengthen tribal nations, conserve and enhance America's great outdoors and engage the next generation."

For many generations the giant sucker known as Cui-ui and Lahontan cutthroat trout, Nevada's state fish, thrived in the Truckee watershed of California and Nevada, providing an important food source for local tribes of Paiute Indians. Lahontan cutthroat trout were possibly the largest trout in North America, reaching over 40 pounds. Mark Twain wrote of their delicious flesh and they were prized as sport trophies by celebrities like Clark Gable.

The arrival of settlers in the late 1800s set in motion a cascade of events detrimental to the fish: mining, logging, ranching, dam construction, water diversion for agriculture, pollution from chemicals and sawdust, overfishing and the introduction of non-native Lake Trout. By the 1940s Lahontan cutthroat trout in Pyramid Lake and Lake Tahoe were gone. Cui-ui were listed as federally endangered in 1967, but, with no access to their spawning grounds, only continued to decline as adults aged and died with no opportunity to reproduce.

USGS science was critical to uncovering restricted access to spawning habitat as the primary cause of Cui-ui decline. Now water is released from dams higher in the watershed to accommodate spawning, and a fish elevator at Marble Bluff dam, a Bureau of Reclamation fish

mitigation facility, allows Cui-ui access to the Truckee River.

Independence Lake harbors one of the last two self-sustaining lake populations of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the Truckee River Watershed that have not gone extinct. Since recovery efforts began in 1997 the average annual survival of Lahontan cutthroat trout in Independence Lake has almost tripled. During that time USGS has worked with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, Truckee River Watershed Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and other partners to restore the engendered fish.

Today many stakeholders value the Truckee River Watershed for different, yet compatible, reasons, including as habitat for threatened, endangered and sacred species; as a source of clean drinking water for Reno, Sparks, and nearby communities; and as a beloved site for fishing, hiking and camping.

The Partners in Conservation Awards recognize outstanding examples of conservation legacies achieved when the Department of the Interior engages groups and individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds, ages and interests to work collaboratively to renew lands and resources. At the annual awards ceremony, the Department of the Interior celebrated conservation achievements that highlight cooperation among diverse federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and private entities; non-profit organizations; and individuals.

More information:

- Project Summary [online](#) .
- [USGS Cui-ui report](#).
- [Information sheet about Independence Lake](#) .
- [Facebook album](#) from June 2013 Volunteer Fish Derby at Independence Lake.

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How dry

Drought worries crisscross the West

By [Dennis Myers](#)
dennism@newsreview.com

This article was published on [01.23.14](#).

Reno's fire chief is worried.

“It’s one of the worst, driest seasons this community has ever seen,” said Chief Michael Hernandez. “It does not bode well for the upcoming fire season.”

Firefighting agencies have limited education resources.

Hernandez hopes state and local government will help prepare the public for what’s ahead.

“We would follow suit with whatever the state does,” he said.

Record low snowpack, severe winter drought, low reservoirs, and weather patterns that indicate continued dry weather are combining to threaten Western quality of life.

The Nevada Water Supply Outlook Report issued on Jan. 8 by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service had a photo on the cover that was captioned, “Dismal snowpack outside USFS [U.S. Forest Service] Lake Tahoe Mgmt. Unit Office, 6,300’ elev.”

The report read in part, “Because of the paucity of storm events and the long duration between said storms, snow that has accumulated at times has also melted, leaving even less for future runoff. The bottom line is that current snowpacks in western Nevada are near historic low levels.

This on the heels of several dry years means that agricultural interests and water users need to be By end of summer, the Truckee River, already low, could be a trickle.



very proactive in managing water resources this year. It is not likely, given current conditions, that water supply conditions will recuperate to near normal conditions by April, the normal peak of snowpack. It is possible—just not very likely. To make matters worse, soil moisture conditions across the state are extremely dry, in many cases at the bottom end of historically observed

values. Dry soils have to reach a saturated state in order to produce runoff—the dryer the soils are, the more melt is consumed to bring them to saturation.”

On Jan. 15, the Obama administration designated nine counties in Nevada as primary natural disaster areas due to drought. “Our hearts go out to those Nevada farmers and ranchers affected by recent natural disasters,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a prepared statement. “President Obama and I are committed to ensuring that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation’s economy by sustaining the successes of America’s farmers, ranchers and rural communities through these difficult times. We’re also telling Nevada producers that USDA stands with you and your communities when severe weather and natural disasters threaten to disrupt your

livelihood.”

The nine counties are Churchill, Clark, Humboldt, Lander, Lyon, Mineral, Nye, Pershing and Washoe. In addition, farmers and ranchers in eight counties also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous. Those counties are Carson City, Douglas, Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Lincoln, Storey and White Pine. More public acreage will be freed up for grazing and there will be additional funding for forage. Emergency loan rates are reduced and land rehabilitation funds are available.

There have been similar drought designations in 10 states besides Nevada—Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Utah—as the impact of drought settles with particular ferocity across the West.

Non-farm businesses and non-profit organizations who do not qualify for USDA help can be assisted by drought recovery loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration. These include small, non-agriculture firms, small agriculture cooperatives, aquaculture firms and private non-profits. Such Economic Injury Disaster loans can be used to meet debts and operating expenses—rent and overhead—which could have been met in the absence of the drought. The interest rate is 4 percent for businesses and 3 percent for nonprofits on terms of up to 30 years.

Help from above?

There seems to be little prospect of drought relief from weather.

The National Weather Service reported “snow-water equivalent values in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the lowest 5th percentile as of mid-January. ...

Meanwhile, across the interior West and Southwest, drought persistence or development is consistent with the CPC [Climate Prediction Center] monthly and seasonal precipitation outlooks.”

A Weather Service map showed Nevada almost entirely within a “Drought persists and intensifies” region.

“Outside of the northern Rockies and portions of Nevada and Utah, most of the West was very dry in December,” according to the National Drought Mitigation Center in

Nebraska. “Areas along the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington had precipitation that was 9-12 inches below normal for the month. Moderate or worse drought

increased from 49.99 to 51.44 percent of the region in December, and severe or worse drought increased from 30.86 to 31.11 percent. ... The drought areas of the West are likely to persist and expand in January."

The Mitigation Center, incidentally, ranks Nevada's drought plan as "response based" rather than "mitigation based."

On Jan. 17, California Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency, released a 20-point drought plan, and urged Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent. "We can't make it rain, but we can be much better prepared for the terrible consequences that California's drought now threatens, including dramatically less water for our farms and communities and increased fires in both urban and rural areas," Brown said. "I've declared this emergency, and I'm calling all Californians to conserve water in every way possible."

Brown assigned various tasks, including contingency plans, to eight state agencies—the Department of Water Resources, Department of General Services, State Water Resources Control Board, Drinking Water Program, Department of Food and Agriculture, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the Drought Task Force. He suspended several regulations or sections of state code.

The California mountain timber town of Willits, where the 1964 Reno arch is now installed, has less than 100 days of worth of water in its municipal reservoirs. Outdoor watering is banned, and a family of four is permitted to use just 150 gallons a day.

The Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, which serves Washoe county areas where range fires are a high risk, urged residents "to use maximum caution with any ignition source, including the careful disposal of fireplace and wood stove ashes."

Chief Hernandez said the Reno Fire Department will be doing what education it can on the normal concerns about fire risks. "We urge fire-safe behavior," he said. "The only thing we can control is human behavior."

"Rapid fire growth and rapid fire disasters" make the activities of people important, Hernandez said. Open fire, smoking, defensible space around outlying homes are familiar points that are hit again and again to get a prevention message out.

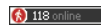
"Making sure that outside summer activities like barbecuing is conducted in a safe manner is something we urge," he said. "We want people to take every precaution possible."

"We have a saying," Hernandez said. "Man plans and God laughs."

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Reno News and Review

Summer problems loom

By [Dennis Myers](#)
dennism@newsreview.com

This article was published on [01.09.14](#).

A snow survey by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) does not bode well for the summer months in areas that depend on the snowpack for water.

Advertisement

“Manual and electronic readings record the snowpack’s water content at about 20 percent of average for this time of year,” a DWR statement read.

Department officials said the survey “found more bare ground than snow” in the Sierra, including around South Lake Tahoe.

California Gov. Jerry Brown has formed a Drought Task Force to plan for the expected water shortages. “DWR and other agencies will streamline transfers of water from areas of relative abundance to areas of critical need, monitor water supply impacts in small rural communities whose groundwater sources are stressed by prolonged dry conditions, and take other steps to mitigate the effects of dry weather,” the statement read.

Last year, at a time when water shortages affected mainly farming, wildlife and fire protection, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval designated the Division of Emergency Management, Division of Water Resources and the State Climatology Office to coordinate information but was unable to offer assistance. “I encourage affected Nevada farmers and ranchers to contact the federal Farm Service Agency’s state office for assistance,” he said. This year, there is now the prospect of drought impact expanding to include municipal shortages.

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Santa Cruz Hires New Water Director from Nevada

Posted by [Brad Kava](#) (Editor) , January 16, 2014 at 01:47 PM

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City Manager Martín Bernal announced the appointment of Rosemary Menard to the

position of Director of Water for the City of Santa Cruz. Ms. Menard will assume her new position on

January 27, 2014. She has acquired thirty plus years' experience in water resources planning and

management, regulatory compliance and environmental sustainability.

"We are very pleased to have Ms. Menard come aboard at a critical point in our water supply discussions," said City Manager Martín Bernal. "She brings a wealth of leadership and experience in

water operations, conservation, administration and policy to our organization."

Ms. Menard most recently served as the Community Services Department Director and Water Resources

Director for Washoe County Nevada. Prior to Washoe County, Ms. Menard held various executive

management positions for the City of Portland Water Bureau and City of Seattle Water Department

including directorships in water operations and maintenance; resource protection and planning; water

quality and compliance; and system planning and environmental management.

Her key accomplishments include:

- Leading the Washoe County program to consolidate Washoe County's water utility with the Truckee Meadows Water Authority in order to provide more cost effective and sustainable water

service to the Truckee Meadows region.

- Leading an interdepartmental process to consolidate the Washoe County's departments of

Building and Safety, Community Development, Public Works, Regional Parks and Open Space into a Community Services Department.

Leading Sandy River Basin Partners multi-party collaborative process to develop an Endangered

Species Act/Clean Water Act regulatory compliance plan for the Bull Run water system.

Awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies.

“In sum, Ms. Menard brings an exceptionally strong and balanced water background from a variety of

well-respected agencies,” added Bernal. “She has extensive community interaction and engagement

experience and is a big picture, long-term thinker. We’re excited to have her join the City.”

Comments

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Truckee River Flows at Risk for Summer

RENO, Nev.--We begin with growing concerns we're heading toward a major water shortage. We're half way through the month of January and parts of our region have only received 5% of the precipitation that usually falls in this month. December was also dry with a little over 20% of average rainfall.

Water experts say the Truckee is already at a reduced flow and it will get worse as our reservoirs dry up.

All of that water flowing in the Truckee has to come from somewhere, but its sources are drying up [quickly](#). Boca is not looking good and the storage area at Lake Tahoe is nearly depleted.

"We are basically out of water in those reservoirs at this time or very close to it," said Chad Blanchard, Federal Water Master.

[Storage](#) on Tahoe has dwindled to 1/12th of capacity and Boca is at 1/8th capacity.

"If we don't start receiving some precip then we are going to be looking at some rough conditions as far as flows," said Blanchard.

It's reminiscent of the situation in August 1994 when a four mile stretch of the Truckee dried-up. That won't happen this year because of protections for fish, but it could get close.

"It will be an absolute trickle but it will be much lower than people are used to," said Blanchard.

"We've been here before, we have seen dry years before and we're still hopefully. We're only a third of the way through the winter season," said Bill Hauck, Senior Hydrologist with TMWA.

Hauck is keeping a close eye on our water supply. Where we may have issues in the river, he says we'll still have enough water [athome](#).

"We have a 9 year drought reserve in place right now between Donner Lake, Independence Lake, Boca and Stampede reservoirs and we are fully prepared to [weather](#) 9 years of dry conditions or 9 years of drought.

Most of that reserve would still flow along the Truckee River but be taken out and west of town and treated, leaving little behind to flow through town.

We're so far behind now that average amounts for the next few months won't cut it. We need above average rainfall. It has happened before and it saved us. In 1989 they coined the term Miracle March when the rain finally came

USDA Declares Nevada Disaster Area Due to Drought

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated nine counties in Nevada as primary natural disaster areas due to the drought.

The counties included are Washoe, Churchill, Lander, Mineral, Pershing, Clark, Lyon, Nye and Humboldt.

Our hearts go out to those Nevada farmers and ranchers affected by recent natural disasters,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “President Obama and I are committed to ensuring that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation’s economy by sustaining the successes of America’s farmers, ranchers, and rural communities through these difficult times. We’re also telling Nevada producers that USDA stands with you and your communities when severe weather and natural disasters threaten to disrupt your livelihood.”

Farmers and ranchers in the following counties in Nevada also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous. Those counties are Douglas, Esmeralda, Lincoln, White Pine, Elko, Eureka, Storey, and Carson City.

Farmers and ranchers in the following counties in California also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous. Those counties are Inyo, Modoc, Nevada, San Bernardino, Lassen, Mono, Placer and Sierra.

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas on Jan. 15, 2014, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

Additional programs available to assist farmers and ranchers include the Emergency Conservation Program, Federal Crop Insurance, and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs

From: Gebhardt, Andy
Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2014 8:56 AM
To: Marlene Olsen
Cc: Mazerres, Kim
Subject: Re: Customer complaint

The customer didn't call or e-mail me back.
Andy

From: "Gebhardt, Andy" <agebhardt@tmwa.com<<mailto:agebhardt@tmwa.com>>>
Date: February 28, 2014 at 8:42:10 AM PST
To: "morganbarr@nvbell.net<<mailto:morganbarr@nvbell.net>>"
<morganbarr@nvbell.net<<mailto:morganbarr@nvbell.net>>>
Subject: Truckee Meadows Water Authority

Hello Morgan-

I am sorry for the issues that you have been having with Truckee Meadows Water Authority. I would like to discuss these with you, if you would like, but I do not wish to further intrude on your time if that is not your desire. I understand that you work during the weekday and are not available by phone. If you wish, I could call you during the weekend, or I can call you back after 5:00pm on Monday, March 3rd.

If you could please let me know what time works best for you, I would be happy to accommodate that time.

I will await to hear from you before further proceeding, and look forward to resolving any issues that we may have.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully-

Andy Gebhardt
Manager Customer Services
Truckee Meadows Water Authority
1355 Capital Blvd. | Reno, NV 89502
O: (775) 834-8007, M: (775) 230-3699
agebhardt@tmwa.com<<mailto:agebhardt@tmwa.com>> | www.tmwa.com<<http://www.tmwa.com>>/>
[Sig-Logo2.jpg]

-----Original Message-----

From: Gebhardt, Andy [<mailto:agebhardt@tmwa.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2014 11:52 AM

To: Mazerres, Kim; Marlene Olsen
Subject: Morgan Barr

Hello-

I pulled the four phone calls, one outbound and three inbound, that we have on record as far as our Call Centers dealings with the customer. Never, during any of the calls, were any of our representatives rude or disrespectful. The calls were handled appropriately, and there didn't appear to be any tension or frustration on the customers end.

Please let me know if you need anything else from me.

Thanks-

Andy

-----Original Message-----

From: Morgan Barr [<mailto:morganbarr@nvgbell.net>]
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2014 4:16 PM
To: Marlene Olsen
Subject: Re: Customer complaint

I would like it to go to the board. I have not had good outcomes with that department. Thank you!
Morgan

Sent from my iPhone

> On Feb 27, 2014, at 4:02 PM, Marlene Olsen <marlene@goodstandingoutreach.com> wrote:

>

> To Morgan Barr:

>

> We have received your letter that was submitted to the TMWA Board through tmwa.com I am forwarding this complaint to our Customer Service Manager for response to you. Please let me know if you would like to submit your letter on to the Board of Directors. Thank you for taking the time to contact us.

>

> Marlene Olsen

> TMWA Communications

> 775-829-2810

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Morgan Barr [<mailto:morganbarr@nvgbell.net>]

> **Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2014 9:24 AM**

> **To: tmwaboard**

> **Subject: Customer complaint**

>

> Good morning,

>

> I am writing this letter due to the extreme lack of customer service from TMWA.

>

> I will start with some background. Over a month ago I received a call about high water usage. I called and was directed to look for broken pipes, running toilets or standing water. I was told that TMWA could send someone out to check to be sure the leak was fixed. I found one of my toilets was running due to a loose seal in the tank. I fixed it and someone came out the next day to measure water usage. I was left a message that there was still a slow leak, not as heavy as previous usage, but still running water. The next day I called back to discuss what I was to do next. I was instructed I needed to call a plumber then TMWA would come back out to be sure it was fixed. I contacted a plumber who came and conducted the same test looking for running water. He found no water movement at all. After his \$100 fee I called back to TMWA thinking there must be something wrong with the meter. I told them I would not be home because I am a single mother and a teacher who works during the day. I asked if I could give my mother's number and have the tech call her when they were on their way. I was told that if they took her number and the tech called with no answer they would cancel the appointment and not come. So I had to let them come again while no one was home. After this check I miraculously had no running water. The next day I called back not happy as I had obtained a plumber for a leak I had already fixed. I asked for some compensation for the extra fee I had incurred. Again I was treated rudely and told there was nothing that could be done.

>

> A week or so later I got a third party call asking about my recent dealings with the company. I explained to them as I have here. However, from that call I was contacted by someone named Necie. She left me a message last week and I did not call back as I have already been told there is nothing they can do. Why waste more of my time with them.

>

> I happen to be home with my sick children today when I answer a call from her this morning. Her condescending tone and pushy attitude for me to relive this horrid experience put me over the edge. She continually said "well there is no note of that", "we have great customer service", and "the manager of customer service would never let this happen"; just put me over. I was confused as to what she wanted from this call and from me. Needless to say I am extremely disappointed with TMWA and furious I have no other water company options to do business with.

>

> In conclusion I am asking that something be done about the lack of custom service as well as some compensation for my out of pocket fee for the plumber. I hope I receive a timely response. If I don't it will confirm that your company truly is not concerned with customer service. Should you need to reach me for further clarification I can be reached at home today at 323-1033 or after 5 pm, weekdays, on the same number.

>

> Disappointed customer,

> Morgan Barr

>

> Sent from my iPhone