

Utility set to meet water needs

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(Photo: RGJ)



Everyone is talking about the drought. So, understandably, we've been getting a lot of questions at Truckee Meadows Water Authority about the status of our water supply. Are we prepared for a drought? What will happen to Truckee River flows? What can I do to help? Why not ask for more conservation now?

As everyone in the Truckee Meadows knows, this year's meager snowpack has been disappointing.

But, despite this third consecutive dry year, TMWA is prepared to meet the water needs of our customers.

We've been through these challenges before. Drought is a natural occurrence in the high desert and our community is well-prepared. We are fortunate to have a robust supply system of upstream reservoirs and local production wells that store drought reserves that are available for use when our community needs them. TMWA also has a long-established aquifer-recharge program through which groundwater supplies are enhanced and protected each winter by recharging them with approximately 5 million gallons of treated surface water per day.

As a desert-based water utility, TMWA plans for dry years. Our staff continually monitors weather and snowpack conditions and we plan for a nine-year dry weather cycle, which is one year longer than the worst drought on record. In addition, our community values our precious water resources and has done an excellent job of conserving water, not only in dry years, but in plentiful years. In fact, the average household has reduced water use by 15 percent over the past 10 years. Because of all these factors, no additional conservation measures will be asked of TMWA customers at this time; we simply ask that you continue your diligence in using water responsibly — both indoors and outside.

We know that river flows will be a concern later this summer. When reservoir storage levels in Lake Tahoe and Boca Reservoir become depleted, river flows will naturally decrease. Fortunately, TMWA has planned for this and will utilize upstream drought reserves and groundwater supplies to augment reduced river flows to meet customer demands. That is the time when conservation and your help can really make a difference, because the water that the community saves then will stay in upstream reservoirs and keep our drought reserves healthy.

As a community-owned water utility with a staff that lives and works here, we share a strong sense of commitment to the quality and availability of our water resources. Our community has always been diligent about conservation, and we encourage everyone to keep up the good work. When mandated river flows cannot be sustained, and drought reserves are needed, we will ask for extra water-saving measures. This is when conservation counts and we can store saved water for future use. When will that be? The weather will determine the exact date, but we anticipate that drought

reserves will need to be used later this summer.

In the meantime, TMWA will continue its three-day-a-week watering schedule. Use the water you need, but don't waste it. If you see water being wasted, please let us know at 775-834-8005, or go to www.tmwa.com and search "Report waste."

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