

Editorial

Plan ahead for more dry times

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How many months of severe drought would it take before Taos simply ran out of water?

Six months? A year? Two?

This is not some far-fetched, sci-fi question.

The hard reality is scientists say we are likely headed for a multi-year megadrought, the likes of which once haunted the region centuries ago.

Maybe they're wrong. Maybe we 11 get lucky.

Maybe the snow and rain will continue to come when it is supposed to.

But if not, what will the town do? What will the pueblos do? What will families do? What will you do?

What will the town do to ensure its citizens don't run out of water? It has already struggled in recent months to keep aging water pumps and infrastructure working.

A drawn-out drought, and low water supplies, could strain that system even more.

What will the county do to help its citizens if community water supplies run dry or pumps fail as they did in Questa in 2016?

If you have money, you can pick up and leave.

If you don't or if you are determined to ride out whatever comes in this place we love, then how will you get water?

These are questions worth asking now while we still have water. It is always better to plan for the hard times when the times aren't so hard.

A couple of stories in this week's *Taos News* by reporter Cody Hooks look at drought and the potential fallout for Taos County of a long, sustained one.

In one story, he explores the strain on neighbors in the Penasco Valley as they strive to share a limited resource during our current drought. In another, he digs into the State Water Plan, in particular the portion about Taos County, and what it reveals about our vulnerable water supplies.

So what are some potential solutions?

One, plan for ways to reuse every drop. A wastewater treatment and reuse plant would be expensive but might make sense for the town. The technology has advanced from years past.

Two, urge people installing new homes—manufactured or site built—to put in dual plumbing, allowing them to reuse grey water on plants. Have design masters, such as those at Earthship Biotecture who for years have designed innovative systems, produce simple brochures that show how people can safely reuse grey water.

Heck, the town or county could throw a design party and see who can come up with the most innovative way to save, reuse or use the least water. That design could launch a new business.

Three, help people practice saving water even when they don't have to. Let's make water saving a constant habit in Taos County. The town could start a yearly contest and hand out prizes to people who use the least water. The newspaper could run a list of "water heroes" at the end of each year.

Four, consult with arborists on the best drought-tolerant trees to plant and cultivate now. Trees shade cityscapes, cooling the landscape and buildings, ultimately saving water.

Whatever we do, we should be practicing now for more dry times ahead.

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