

August 17, 2022

Honorable Planning Commissioners:

My brother, a retired state prison warden, lives in a small town in the foothills of the Sierra. He and his wife live in a triple wide mobile home on 3.5 acres. Just recently, the town's only water well went dry. Water is now being hauled in by truck to fill their new above ground tank. A new, deeper water well is slated to be drilled months out in the future. For now, he and his neighbors are more or less stuck; it's taking a great deal of adjusting being without their community well, but they're all working on it together, each resident now patiently waiting for the tanker truck to arrive. Fact is, hundreds of water wells have dried up in the Central Valley, and nearby localities. They're just another group that has joined the club.

As our climate gets hotter and drier with climate change, it's important that we as urban water consumers and residents of Yucaipa-Calimesa make stronger efforts to adapt in our own communities. Wherever possible, we should hook up to the purple pipes that carry our recycled water, and use it for landscaping. Or we can take out lawns and get creative with xeriscaping, a low water use landscape for front or backyards. Imagine no more big water bills, no more having to mow the lawn! Using decomposed granite, rocks of many varieties and sizes, and sparse plantings from arid landscapes, xeriscapes, properly planned, can be seriously breathtaking!

We are now in Drought Contingency Plan Stage II. This plan lists more than a dozen specific actions Yucaipa Valley Water should take in response to this drought. Two of these actions involve notification of the public about the drought and how we can save water, the actions we can take as citizens to save water. We're all in this changing climate together; we're all stakeholders reliant on these increasingly scarce water resources. Let's use our drought plan to save water, to adapt to our changing landscape, to make these very important adjustments to this long term aridity. Our elected and appointed representatives should help us with climate change adaptation by implementing our Drought Contingency Plan, and letting people know about it. How about a study session or workshop with the city council and representatives of Yucaipa Valley Water District?

My brother and his family will get through this recurring protracted drought. They know droughts are becoming more frequent, more severe, and longer lasting with climate change. They know there's going to be less snowpack in the Sierra, snowpack so many Californians depend on. Their new well will certainly be deeper, and more dependable. As for Yucaipa, it's evident our water resources from Northern California are becoming increasingly uncertain, and our response should be to appropriately adjust to a world being transformed by climate change. We haven't time for ignorance and disbelief. We should be asking vital questions about drought tolerant landscaping and drainage, for instance. It's time for more knowledgeable civic leadership on climate change and water, as it continues to become hotter and drier, with a significantly higher potential for extreme weather, such as heat waves and flooding. Planning commissioners should be playing a pivotal role in the process of climate change adaptation, particularly as it applies to new or additional development review, whether commercial or residential.

Respectfully,

  
Bill McEwen  
Yucaipa

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