

June 1, 2008



***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES AND GROWTH IN THE TRUCKEE
MEADOWS***

The purpose of regional planning is to allow our elected officials to make sound decisions that ultimately benefit our community and its citizens. Planners develop conceptual scenarios based on credible data to enable government officials to determine what is feasible and desirable in our community. This allows elected officials from the Truckee Meadows to understand implications *before* they make decisions. Utilizing this data, government entities can better plan land use, water resources, transportation, schools, and other infrastructure to ensure we protect and preserve natural resources and our quality of life.

How fast is the Truckee Meadows growing?

According to the Nevada State Demographer's Office, Washoe County's 2007 population was approximately 420,000 people. Our average annual growth over the past 20 years has been around 9,000 people per year, or an average of 2.8% per year. The most recent population forecast adopted by the Regional Planning Governing Board is approximately 600,000 people by the year 2030. That number is in step with the region's average growth rate in the past and is currently being utilized to determine how our area should grow over the next several decades.

Where does our current water supply come from?

Eighty-five percent of the current water supply in the Truckee Meadows comes from California via the Truckee River. The remaining 15 percent is supplied through ground water wells.

Soon, the privately financed Vidler Water Company Fish Springs Ranch project will import up to 8,000 additional acre-feet of water annually from northern Washoe County to the North Valleys area. That is enough water to support up to 16,000 homes or more with expanded reclaimed water use for outdoor irrigation.

Can growth outpace our water supply?

No for two reasons:

1) Actual growth cannot outpace water supply because new development approvals, including building permits and subdivision maps, are required by law to be accompanied by proof of valid and adequate water rights. Local water purveyors, such as Washoe County Department of Water Resources or Truckee Meadows Water Authority, cannot deliver more water than is allowed by water rights and drought reserves – for any purpose, including growth. The goal of these water purveyors is to manage our existing water supplies to ensure that this precious resource is available to meet current demand and to plan for future water supplies to provide the same assurance to future users.

2) Water rights for the Truckee River and surrounding creeks were fixed with the Orr Ditch Decree in 1944 and cannot change, only ownership of those water rights can change.

Where does water come from for new development and who pays for it?

New developments must acquire water rights from a willing seller. Anytime someone wants to build a house, subdivision, or a business, they must bring existing water rights to their water purveyor. In most cases, agricultural irrigation rights are purchased by developers and converted to municipal use for new projects.

There cannot be an increase in the amount of water taken from the river. The only thing that changes is how the water is used.

The development community pays for infrastructure and water rights related to new growth when they build a project.

Will the Truckee River provide enough water during a drought if there is more growth?

In a normal year, the Truckee Meadows uses only about 3% of the water in the river, and uses only about 8% in a drought year. The Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) has planned for our driest years by storing water supplies in our upstream reservoirs in California and in underground aquifers. The amount stored at any time is enough to supply the community with water for one year longer than the longest drought on record or, nine years. When needed, TMWA releases the drought supplies from Donner, Independence, and Stampede Lakes into the Truckee River. This water flows to the Truckee Meadows, where it is used to serve residents and sustain wildlife and aquatic habitat. Underground water can also be utilized.

What about our ground water resource and how does growth affect private wells?

During the last fifteen years, the local water purveyors have been assessing the quantity and quality of our ground water resources throughout southern Washoe County. As a result, the placement of municipal wells is being limited by resource availability and the locations that have the least impact on private wells.

When conflicts do arise, the Well Mitigation Hearing Board (WMHB) meets with private well owners and water purveyors to determine responsibility and make recommendations regarding what mitigation actions should be taken to correct any problems.

TMWA also conducts a recharge program during the winter. The Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) program pumps treated surface water into existing wells to both enhance and replenish our water resource in the Truckee Meadows and improve the water quality at well sites. Last winter, more than three million gallons per day were injected into ten different well sites across our region. The process occurs in healthy water years, during months when the demand for water is low. In the winter, water use drops to one fourth of the average summer usage. The stored water can then be accessed during drought periods, if necessary. Since TMWA began recharging local aquifers in 1993, ASR has successfully banked nearly six billion gallons of water.

*This document was collaboratively prepared by staff from the following agencies:
City of Reno, City of Sparks, Washoe County, Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency
and Truckee Meadows Water Authority.*

For further information please contact the following:

Water Resources:

Truckee Meadows Water Authority
1355 Capital Blvd
Reno, NV
(775) 834-8002
www.tmh2o.com

Washoe County
Department of Water Resources
4930 Energy Way
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 954-4600
www.washoecounty.us/water

Western Regional Water Commission
Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission
4930 Energy Way
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 954-4600
www.wrwc.us

Regional Planning:

Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency
One East First Street, Suite 1100,
Reno, NV 89501-1625
(775) 321-8385
www.tmrpa.org

Local Land Use:

Washoe County
1001 E. 9th Street, Suite A-275
Reno, NV 89512
(775) 328-3600 Reception
www.washoecounty.us

City of Sparks
Community Development
1675 E. Prater Way, Suite 107
Sparks, NV
Planning - Zoning (775) 353-2340
www.cityofsparks.us

City of Reno
450 Sinclair Street,
Reno, NV
Mailing Address: PO Box 1900,
Reno, NV 89505
'Permit Place' Phone: (775) 334-2063
www.cityofreno.com