

## State's water supply not endless

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By: Gerald R. Walson - Commentary

California's water plan, currently being updated, implies that our supply of water to support development is endless. This plan does not address the crucial question of what is the limiting supply of water and what is the implication of this water supply barrier on the population that can be supported? Current state policy requires local governments to provide their "fair share" of housing to accommodate the state's population projections and the water purveyors blindly step up and say they can supply the necessary water.

Since there is not an endless supply of water, at some point there will not be an adequate supply of water to support additional development, and the state's policy on housing to support further population will have to be redefined. At some point the inn will be full. The state's water plan needs to address this crucial issue now. We need a "water carrying-capacity analysis" to determine what our limiting water capacity is and the impact this limiting capacity has for growth in population and housing, and we need to plan for this eventuality.

Population growth is not an immutable fact of life.

What is our water availability? California gets its water from three sources, the Colorado River, the Sierras and from ground water (percolated rain/snow fall).

Our share of Colorado River water has been reduced and the Colorado compact will be redefined in the near future, leading to further reductions. The amount of water we get from the Sierras is finite, as is the amount of water we get from groundwater.

So-called "new sources" of water (as pitched by the water planners) are deceptive since in reality they are only a redistribution of existing water sources and represent "paper" water. These are: conservation/recycling (which is limited), desalinization (which is also limited), or taking water away from agriculture and/or the environment (which is also limited). The big question here is: How much water

do we divert from agriculture (and then where do we get our agriculture products from), or how much water do we divert from the environment (and how much of the environment are we willing to destroy)?

We need to plan. Obviously, our supply of water is limited. So the crucial question remains, what is our limited supply of water availability and how much population can it support? Our planners need to address this critical issue. If our planners choose to ignore this issue, then who is planning for the future of California?

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