

Clark County water rates increased

By Bonar Tucker
YELLIN' REBEL

Clark County Commission increased the price of water on Tuesday in a first step toward heading off a water shortage in Southern Nevada.

The higher prices are hoped to discourage un-needed water use, officials hope.

Critics are calling the plan "too little, too late," saying "it is the first time restrictions were put on man-made lakes after many years of inaction and many artificial bodies of water."

UNLV falls within the county boundaries and will pay its bill according to the new rates.

In the United States, the average person uses 167 gallons of water per day in his/her home.

In Las Vegas, the average person uses 366 gallons of water a day in his/her home.

It is estimated that 19 percent of Las Vegas are responsible for using 63 percent of the annual water supply.

Las Vegas use an average of 10.3 million gallons of water per day just in flushing toilets. Even compared to Tucson, Ariz., Southern Nevadans use almost twice as much water per person.

Las Vegas Valley Water District would like to avoid mandated allocations of water.

But, couldn't the situation in

Las Vegas conceivably come to that?

Al Hylton, Clark County Community College environmental science instructor said, "Water conservation has to be enforced. It won't be done voluntarily because we don't do very much voluntarily."

Residents in southeast Nevada agree. Their rural area residents (of Railroad Valley) feel Las Vegas ought to learn and practice water conservation before trying to "steal" theirs.

State law prohibits using more water than is replenished by snow run-off from the Spring Mountain Range.

This snow, however, only returns an estimated 60 percent of Las Vegas' current usage.

So, in October, the water district here applied for water rights in other counties and on all unclaimed underground water in Railroad Valley and in 25 other valleys in central and southeast Nevada. They are attempting to secure 865,000 acres of state owned water from three counties.

Nevada Magazine interviewed Gerald Sharp of Railroad Valley concerning Vegas' application to take nearly 120,000 acre feet a year from the aquifer there.

His statement reflects the attitude of many in the area who do not want the applications granted.

"In five years, we'll be out of

business," he said of his cattle ranching business, "and they [Las Vegas] will be out of water again."

A UNLV junior who asked that her name be withheld said, "Just watch what happens next. After all the wasting by the big developers with their man-made lakes and the hotels with all their green carpet lawns, now the commissioners will make the little guy pay for their wastes and probably they will get some kind of break. Basically, the rich will get richer."

A sophomore at UNLV, who identified himself only as Todd S., said, "Hey, whatever it takes! Money talks. I came from Reno where they are very aware of the drought. Maybe the rate increase will wake people up down here."

John Smith, a Las Vegas Review Journal columnist, said, "The reality is clear: Clark County is starting into the mean face of a water crisis. Given its current growth, southern Nevada could have severe water problems by the turn of the century."

A large part of the excessive water usage in the Las Vegas area is due to what County Commissioner Paul Christensen calls "fugitive water."

This is water that just runs off the grounds from leaky sprinklers or untended hoses in large amounts, he explained.

Still, up until the passage of higher water rates on Tuesday, and

in spite of the prediction of the Las Vegas valley reaching seasonal water shortages in the upcoming summer months, no laws have enforced the prohibition of wasted water within the county.

Water wasting within the city has been another story.

Jim Hunter, code enforcement officer for the City of Las Vegas, said many citations are issued dealing with water violations in the city.

"If we are called by a neighbor or cite an offense of water ordinances we issue a friendly letter to the citizen," Hunter said. "This usually consists of 'Please assist us with this problem' sort of thing."

"Then, we go back to check and see if the wasting of water has ceased. If not, a second correction notice is sent," he said.

If the party still doesn't rectify the grievance, it is treated as a misdemeanor in court and can carry a maximum of six months in jail or \$1,000 fine.

Hunter admitted most will not be fined so high but the actions are followed through to discontinue the water wasting.

Christensen, on the other hand, disagreed with the city's plan.

"The ordinances within the city have never been enforceable," he said. "There is too much difficulty in proving whose fault a leaky sprinkler head is."

He likened the problem to a "how much is too much" situation.

"It's like trying to prove drunk driving — just how drunk is too drunk?" he asked.

Christensen said the county was working on a master plan for dealing with water in the county area, which covers the greater part of the valley.

"There are complicated parts of this puzzle and it's all part of a great picture that we try to tie together with building codes, overall conservation and planting," he said.

In contrast, the city has had its plan in effect for two years.

"We have already had an impact on this issue," Hunter said. "About two years ago, the city council altered jurisdiction which gave over watering enforcement to us."

Hunter said, "The problem isn't gone but even with additional development, [The Lakes] it hasn't worsened."

UNLV, before Tuesday, had no restrictions in the amount of water used.

Dennis Swartzell, in charge of grounds at UNLV, said, "We appreciate it if others let us know of water run-off on the campus. We always have efforts toward water conserving in plant materials."

Swartzell said he knows of no plans for turf reduction at UNLV.

"Maybe there are plans for a building in the middle of turf, but as far as I know, there's no plans for less grass," he said.

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Shortage

continued from front page

viding graduate programs that will train the professors of tomorrow.

The College of Education is in the process of reactivating three doctorate programs. Degrees will be offered in curriculum and instruction, counseling, and special education. The college currently offers graduate study in one field, education administration.

Ernest Peck agrees on taking an aggressive approach to providing graduate and doctorate programs. He blames low enrollment in the sciences on a "fear of math" that seems to be common in American schools.

The College of Science and Mathematics recruits heavily for graduate students in the fields of physics, math, biology, and chemistry, Peck said.

His department, when conducting a professor search, already recruits on an international basis. Peck says that American attitudes towards science have resulted in more foreign-born students becoming the educators of the future.

Peck noted that the future might see salary compression used as a way of attracting and holding young professors.

Salary compression is squeez-

ing the increases in pay that usually come with seniority into a much shorter time frame. In a university using this as an incentive a first or second year professor may earn nearly as much as professors with twenty years experience.

One bright spot in the outlook is that mandatory retirement for teachers is no longer required.

But the problem is not teachers who teach too long. Dean Peck said, "Most teachers retire because they want to, not because they have to. The average age of retirement is around 62."

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