

A disconnect between water supply and demand will always exist. The reason is that every time more water is made available to a community or state it creates an instant invitation to increase demand by way of development. Before long there is more demand for water than what was being made available. Our economic system demands that growth is essential if we are to prosper. Water is becoming like fiat money we continue to think there is more available and seem to think that if we use it up more will be found elsewhere. We never admit that there is not enough water until the well or spigot goes dry. In other words we do not live within our means.

We seem to think that conservation is the answer to our immediate problems. However conservation will always be a short term fix. What you don't use, someone else will. Planning truly needs to focus on how we can best use what water is available and how that dynamic might change in the future. This may in the future mean that water is no longer a right as we currently believe it to be. This would be a major paradigm shift. It would be nice to think that current developed water rights might be protected now and into the future. People that are moving to arid regions should not expect to have their demand for water met at the current level of those who are already here. If the planners believe that everyone is to be expected to receive the same amount of water, all the planning in the world will not be able to meet that expectation. All current water plans deal almost entirely on project implementation. It is always thought that the redistribution of water from one source to another is the answer to how to deal with the problem of supply and demand. Every time water is redistributed some people lose their water while others gain water. Will it ever be equitable? Just wait until it is the redistribution of people.

This is the situation with the pending Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC application to withdraw 54,000 acre feet of groundwater from the Plains of San Augustin annually. The result of this action is that the people on the plains will lose their water, the current value of their land and in some cases their livelihood. The people who will gain from this proposed application would be the developers in the middle Rio Grande Valley and the expected population growth where the water is to be developed. And again in no time the demand will outstrip this supply. This supply is not sustainable for any length of time because the basin is currently losing water from evapotranspiration, current pumping from existing wells and through fault features that are already supplying water to the Tularosa-San Francisco Rivers, the Gila River, Alamosa Creek, Milligan Gulch, and La Jencia drainage. The reason this is considered so valuable to the developers is that they can make money on this scheme. They could care less that it could cause irreparable damage to other watersheds and people.

Until we get serious about water desalinization there will never be enough potable water to meet future demands. Right now we are just shuffling the deck over and over again to meet current demands. We are trying to use old policies and strategies to re-allocate water to meet these demands, instead of thinking of new ways to meet the challenges ahead.

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