



Water policy

Shortage is new normal

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"Drought" sounds so temporary - and there's nothing temporary about the decreasing availability of water in Southern California.

As such, we need a new word - and a new attitude - to deal with this region's new reality: water shortage is the new normal, and it's time to adjust accordingly.

State leaders have begun hearings on legislation to resolve California's water crisis. Solutions could include building a canal to carry water around the ecologically fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and mandates that Californians reduce water consumption.

Balancing the water claims of farmers, fishermen, environmentalists, households and industrial users is about as easy as negotiating a Middle East peace agreement. Yet, this difficult compromise must be reached.

The status quo is unacceptable.

The situation in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has only worsened in the last few years and the effects have been felt down the state. After a judge halted much of the water pumping from the delta to protect the tiny Delta smelt fish, some farmers in the San Joaquin Valley had to fallow fields for lack of water and

communities in Southern California have imposed water-use restrictions. Meanwhile, the environmental damage to the delta is also blamed for shutting down commercial salmon fishing.

Meteorologists are once again expecting a dry year ahead - the fifth in a row. And some long-range forecasters suggest global warming will reduce the Sierra snowpack that provides much of Southern California's water supply.

While Sacramento attempts to reach a statewide resolution to the water shortage, we urge legislators and local leaders to focus on permanent solutions. Leaders should move beyond temporary measures - such as prohibitions on lawn watering - and enact regulations and price signals that make water conservation a way of life in California.

There are new technologies to help - recycling, capturing stormwater for reuse and graywater systems can all help maximize every drop of water.

With the Inland Empire Utilities Agency and local water retailers showing the way, the Inland Valley has become a leader in recycling water and capturing runoff.

Southern Californians have shown a great willingness to make temporary adjustments to get through the current drought; some cities have reported more than 10 percent drop in water use. But adapting to a dehydrated future will require more substantial lifestyle changes

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and investments - in landscaping, home appliances, community design and water-saving technology. And cities and states need to move quicker on adopting and encouraging creative water usage - and reuse.

The first step is to retire the word "drought." The sooner California stops treating the water shortage as a temporary situation, the sooner California will be come up with the solutions needed to keep hydrated.

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A black and white photograph of an older man with glasses, wearing a light-colored sweater over a collared shirt. He is holding a whiteboard marker in his right hand and looking directly at the camera. In the background, there is a chalkboard with some faint mathematical symbols like z , $1=$, and $p=$.

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