

Coachella Valley Water Resource Guardians Needed

Palm Springs, California. In the Coachella Valley desert communities water is arguably our most precious natural resource. It makes the desert habitable, fosters an attractive lifestyle and allows businesses to prosper. Without it the area would be a vacant swath of sand, rocks and hills. Fortunately there is a huge water aquifer beneath the valley floor that serves to make the desert bloom and present the illusion of an eternal garden paradise. It's the water continually pumped from the aquifer that makes living in the valley such an attractive place to reside.

The water in the aquifer is slowly disappearing. Valley water agencies and private landowners pump water from the aquifer, deliver it throughout the area or otherwise use as needed. There are no limits on the amounts pumped or the purposes for which used. Outside water, primarily from the Colorado River, is imported to replenish the aquifer. Unfortunately, the water being imported is less than the amount being removed and there are no additional sources available for aquifer replenishment. The aquifer water table level is falling and nothing of significance is being done to reverse that trend.

The valley's water agencies view their function as that of water delivery contractors. They pump the water, deliver it to customers and manage the import of outside water that goes into the aquifer. Water conservation is a phrase they often use but it's a concept not central to their delivery mission. They offer advice, a bit of conservation-related financial assistance, and support voluntary efforts to conserve water use. They do not consider themselves to be Water Resource Guardians and their measures to foster water savings are probably best rated as timid.

Coachella Valley needs Water Resource Guardians. Someone or agency is needed to take the lead with respect to providing help and guidance in what should be accepted standards of water use versus waste. As one of our most precious commodities we need to be continually vigilant of the importance water plays in our lives and how easily it could disappear. A Desert Water Use Code is one that should exist and become part of our daily awareness. Particular attention should be paid to water that's used in public for it's that perception of what is or is not acceptable that often drives private consumption.

A Desert Water Use Code should seek to question water waste. Among the types of concerns we should all seek to address are the following observations of questionable or inappropriate use.

- Irrigation water runoff flowing down street gutters.
- Watering irrigated areas twice, or more, daily.
- Automatically serving glasses of water on restaurant dining tables.
- Rinsing driveways and walkways.
- Mid-day irrigation during summer months and other hot periods.
- Planting and irrigating water-intensive plants.
- Drenching recently scalped grass areas in order to foster rapid replacement growth.

Water waste occurs daily throughout the valley and it's evident for all to see. It's time to stop playing water conservation charade and get serious. Our water agencies, local governments and even the Coachella Valley Association of Governments appear unwilling to assume the conservation leadership role. Our valley needs Water Resource Guardians - and now! Perhaps it's a task too big for small-minded political leadership. Who will lead the way? Who will step up and take on the jobs of Water Resource Guardians?

Bond Shands

Desert Political Opinion at www.DesertObserver.com

February 7, 2014

www.DesertObserver.com

A Palm Springs and Coachella Valley Community Politics Blog

Copyright © Bond Shands - P.O. Box 4826, Palm Springs, CA 92263 - Reproduction with attribution permitted.