White Salmon CityLab Board Meeting
A G E N D A
July 29, 2024 – 6:00 PM
119 NE Church Ave and Zoom
Meeting ID: 817 6542 0087
Call In: 1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81765420087

Welcome

Discussion Items

Status Updates - follow-up on previous tasks

Banner Update

Draft Emissions Reduction Plan Update

Equitable WSMC Fee Changes

- Service Call Fee
- Shut-off for Non-payment Fee
- New Account Fee
- Late Charge-Delinquent Fee
- Payment Plans (over $300, consider lowering to $100)
- ADU Base Fee + ADU Billing Definition
- Code Language: Water Shut Off during heat

Water Conservation Program Ideas

- Water Usage/Efficiency Incentives

July 30th Farmer's Market

El Grito - booth (Possibly 9/22)

Next Meeting

Hi all, here is the agenda for Monday.

Monday, July 29, 2024

- Status Updates - follow-up on previous tasks
    - Banner Update
    - Draft Emissions Reduction Plan Update
    - Equitable WSMC Fee Changes
        - Service Call Fee
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        - ADU Base Fee + ADU Billing Definition
        - Code Language: Water Shut Off during heat
    - Water Conservation Program Ideas
        - Water Usage/Efficiency Incentives
- July 30th Farmer's Market
- El Grito - booth (Possibly 9/22)

Notes:

- Status Updates - follow-up on previous tasks
    - Banner Update - it's up!
    - Draft Emissions Reduction Plan Update - **Stephanie, in tomorrow's meeting, can you confirm that council will be considering this on August 7th?**
    - Equitable WSMC Fee Changes - See below for what I sent on 6/19 that you can use as reference for the fees:
        - Service Call Fee
        - Shut-off for Non-payment Fee
        - New Account Fee
        - Late Charge-Delinquent Fee
        - Payment Plans (over $300, consider lowering to $100)
        - ADU Base Fee + ADU Billing Definition - including permitted ADU vs. condition permitted ADU, this may have to move to Planning once we have a recommendation.

Code Language: Water Shut Off during heat

- Water Conservation Program Ideas - **we may run out of time for this**, if we do, we can roll to September's meeting as our first topic.

  - Water Usage/Efficiency Incentives - including Steven's article he shared with us too. **Attached**

  - Bend example: https://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/environment/city-of-bend-is-offering-cash-incentives-to-residents-who-tear-out-their-lawns/article_7c8994b6-f6a9-11ee-a8b4-13c4b447b572.html#tncms-source=rt_rail_popular_stories

- July 30th Farmer's Market - confirm who is able to attend and times, also possibly handouts of the recommendations? Discuss.

- El Grito - booth (Possibly 9/22)

https://library.municode.com/wa/white_salmon/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT13PUSE_CH13.16WASERACH_13.16.025MOWAFE

Note that we will focus on, in our next meeting, the following fees:

- Service Call Fee
- Shut-off for Non-payment Fee
- New Account Fee
- Late Charge-Delinquent Fee

Charge Description	In City	Outside City
Service Call Fee	$40.00*	$56.00*
Shut-off for Non-payment	$40.00*	$46.00*
New Account Fee	$25.00	$33.00
Late Charge—Delinquent Fee	$10.00	$10.00

Additionally, we will discuss the ADU base rate, which is this language in 13.16.025 (water) and 13.16.055 (sewer):

> *Residential properties with more than one residential unit (e.g. apartments, multi-plexes, homes with accessory dwelling units) will be charged the applicable monthly residential basic rate times the number of residential units.*

It was previously this language (just for context in what was changed):

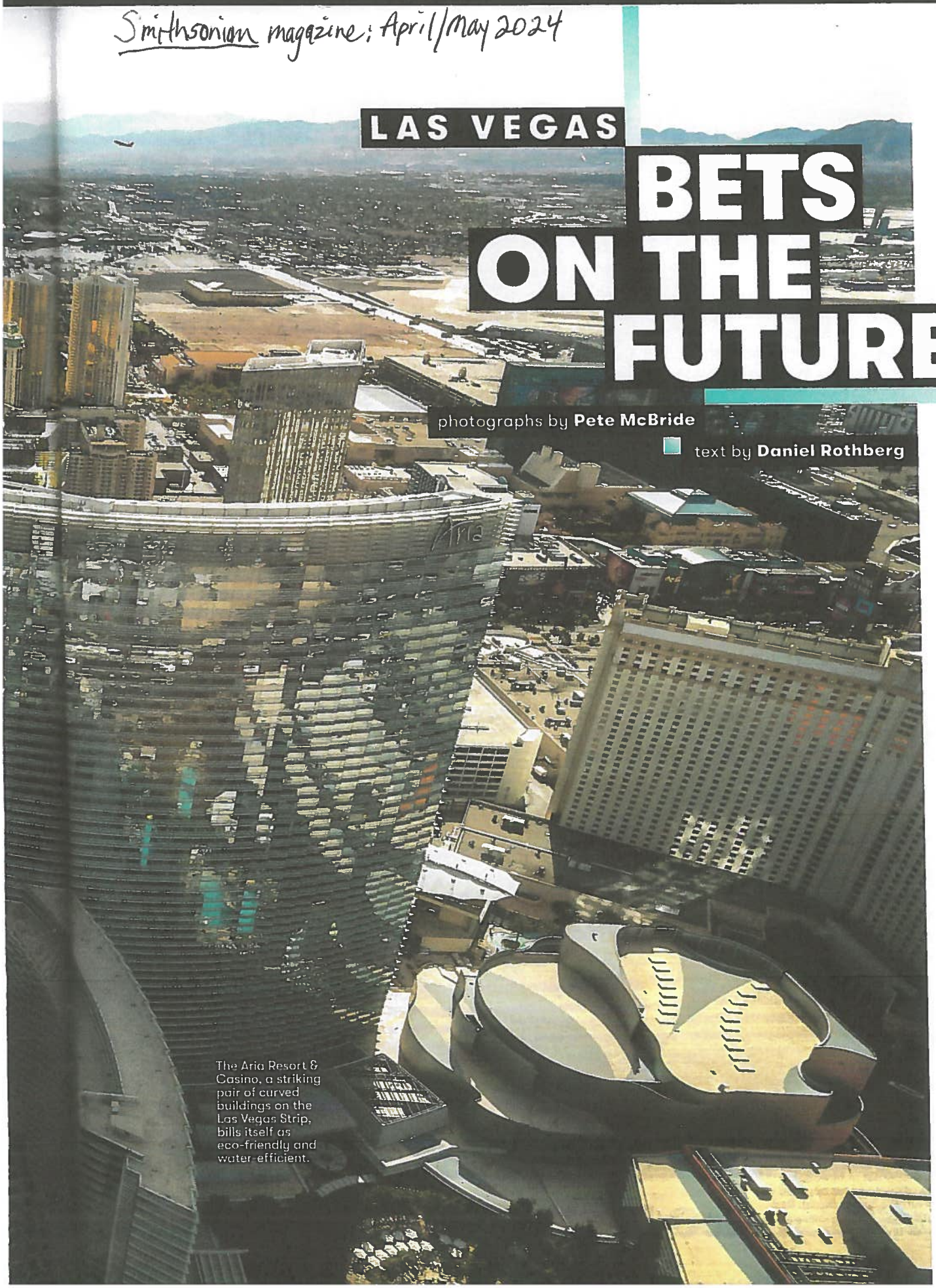
> *Residential structures with more than one residential unit (e.g. apartments, multi-plexes) will be charged the applicable monthly residential basic rate times the number of units. Residential structures with accessory dwelling units will be charged additional rate based on 1/3 of the base fee.*

Smithsonian magazine; April/May 2024

LAS VEGAS BETS ON THE FUTURE

photographs by **Pete McBride**

text by **Daniel Rothberg**



The Aria Resort & Casino, a striking pair of curved buildings on the Las Vegas Strip, bills itself as eco-friendly and water-efficient.

Anything goes in Las Vegas, except excessive water use. Two decades ago, the city began to grapple with a reality that many other cities in the Southwest were trying to put off: Eventually, it could run out of water.

In contrast with cities like Phoenix or Los Angeles, which get water from a number of sources, Las Vegas still gets about 90 percent of its water from the Colorado River, and it has little other water to tap into. By the time the river hit a record low in 2002, Las Vegas had begun taking aggressive water-saving measures to meet population growth and adapt to a drying river. The city known for excess and summer pool parties began counting every drop, even the small dribbles flowing onto asphalt. "We couldn't have made additional water commitments," says John Entsminger, the Southern Nevada Water Authority's general manager—no more homes, no more casinos, no population growth at all.

Today signs of growth in Las Vegas are unavoidable. Traffic. New buildings. A push to open up federal public land for private development. At a diner in downtown Las Vegas, where construction cranes mark the sky, State Assemblyman Howard Watts III, who has sponsored a slate of recent Las Vegas conservation bills, says growth is something the city continues to grapple with—and a lot comes down to how water is managed. "What's the water bottom line going to be," he asks, "and how do you make that math work?"

Workers remove grass from Las Vegas lawns. A law passed in 2021 prohibits commercial and multi-family properties from watering non-functional turf (as opposed to useful turf like soccer fields). Residents of single-family homes get a cash incentive for grass removal.

Las Vegas still gets about 90 pe
cent of its water from the Colorado River.

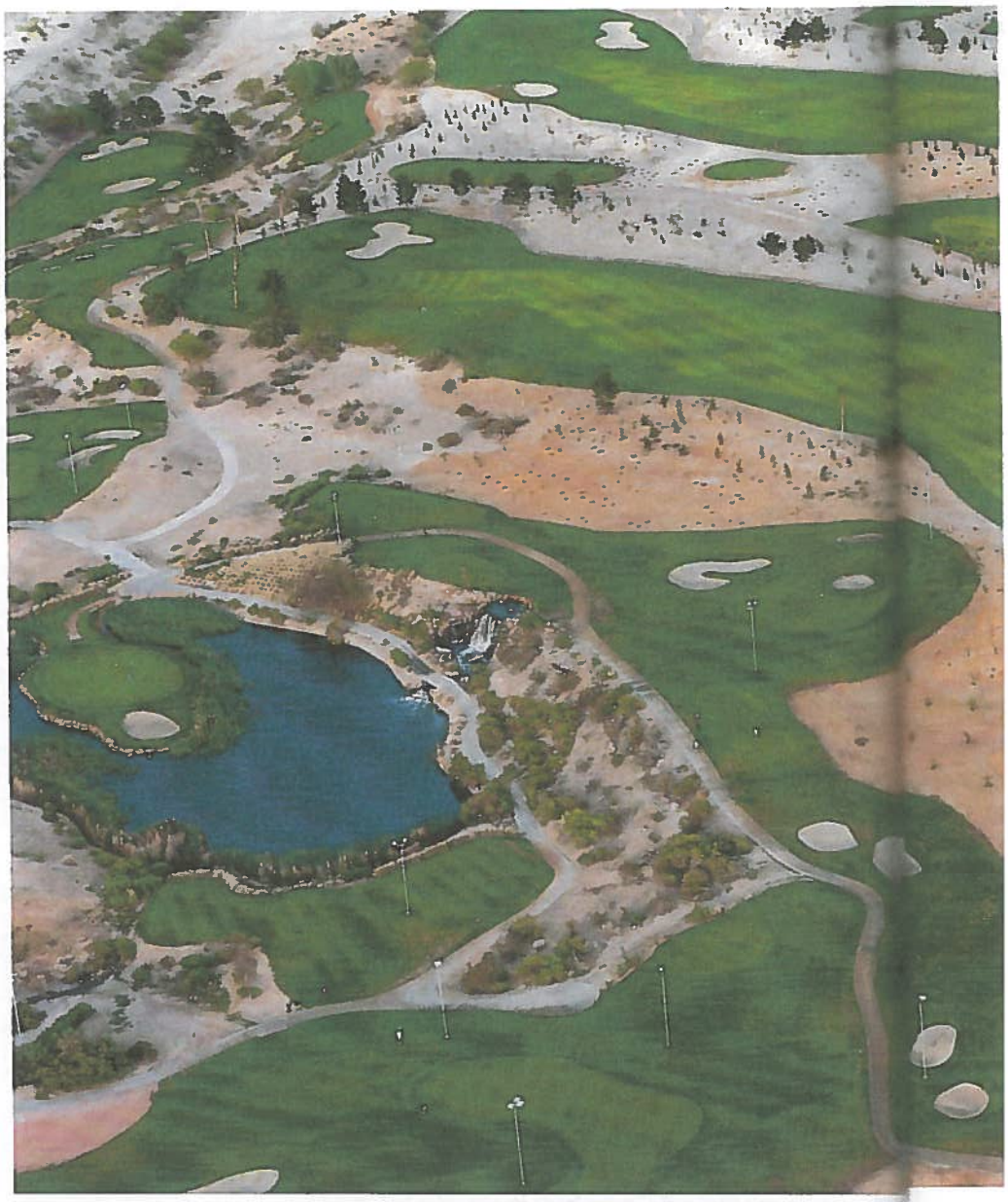
The restrictions in place in Las Vegas include limiting pool sizes, forbidding cooling systems that pass air over evaporated water (also known as swamp coolers) in new buildings, issuing fines when water leaks onto sidewalks, restricting personal car washing to once a week, and prohibiting homes from having fountains or decorative ponds larger than ten square feet. Vegas has also successfully incentivized the removal of roughly 200 million square feet of turf, saving more than 10 percent of Nevada's Colorado River allocation. (The state is allotted about 1.8 percent of the river's total water supply.) Taken together, the city's water restrictions have freed up room for growth: Over the past two decades, Southern Nevada added about 750,000 residents while reducing Colorado River water consumption by 31 percent, according to one official.

But the need for conservation has become even more pressing. In 2022, Lake Mead and Lake Powell, the two largest reservoirs in the Unites States, both fed by the Colorado River, were again at record lows. Federal water officials warned that major cutbacks were necessary in some of the states that rely on the Colorado River: Nevada, Arizona and California. In response, the federal government declared its authority—in a worst-case shortage crisis—to make sweeping water cuts to cities across the Southwest. Such a scenario was avoided following a wet winter in early 2023, but climate scientists expect the overtapped watershed to provide less and less water in the future.

The Phoenix area and other cities are now facing pressure to catch up with Las Vegas as the Southwest becomes even more arid. Phoenix proper gets only about one-third of its water from the Colorado River. But outside its city limits, areas like Scottsdale are more dependent on the river. Scottsdale asked its residents to reduce water use by 5 percent, stopped homeowner associations from requiring overseeding lawns and banned the use of grass in front yards for new developments.

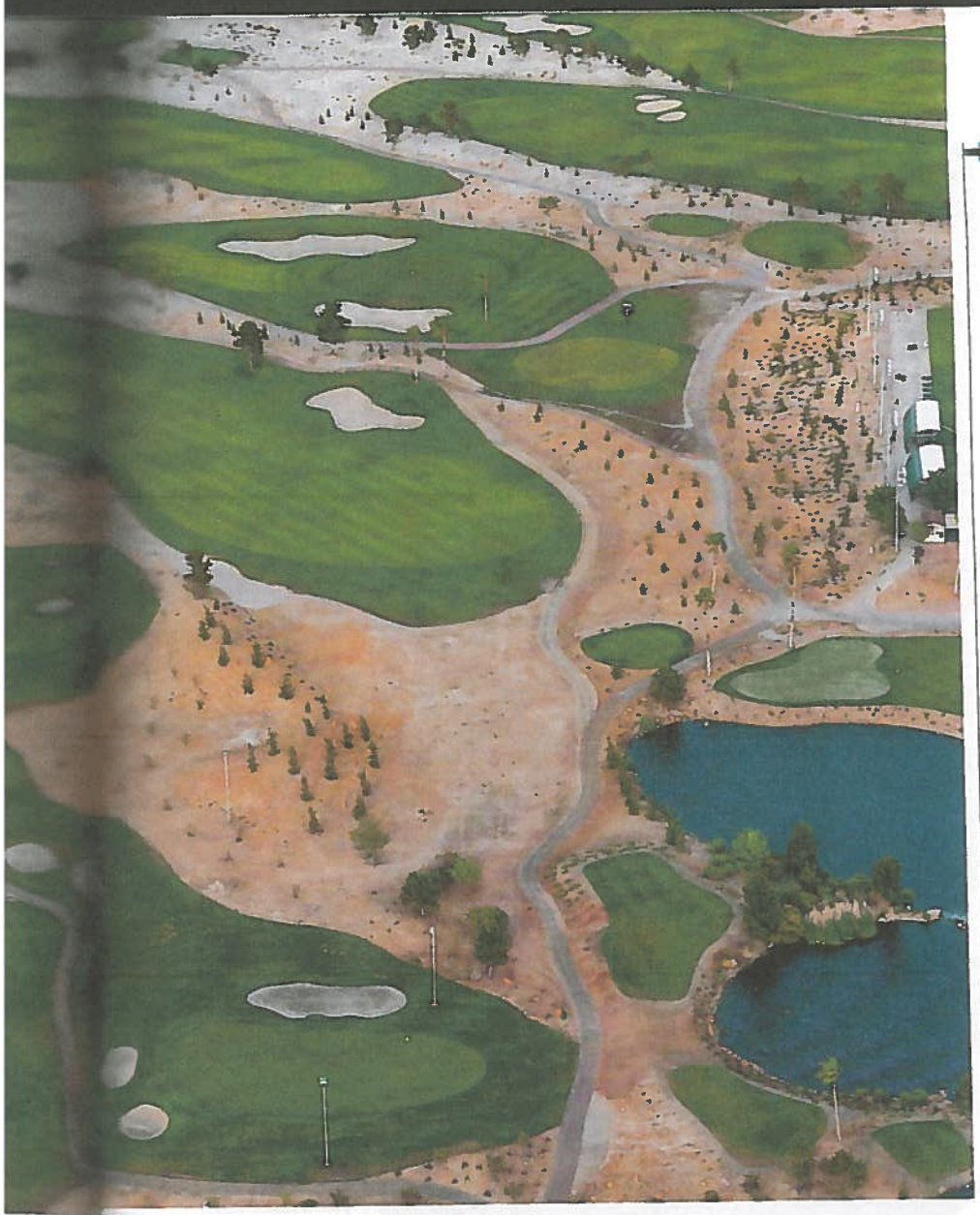
In an especially dramatic move, Scottsdale cut off water to the Rio Verde Foothills, an outlying community of 2,000 homes. The community was built by so-called wildcat developers who avoided official requirements for subdivisions. Arizona's Groundwater Management Act, passed in 1980, requires developers in urban areas to prove that they can meet residents' water needs for the next 100 years. The developers behind Rio Verde Foothills took advantage of legal loopholes to sidestep this requirement. So people went ahead and bought homes there, even though Rio Verde Foothills lies beyond the reach of Scottsdale's pipe systems, and the groundwater isn't plentiful enough for all residents to access wells.

For decades, many of the households in Rio Verde Foothills had their water



A guest swims in a Las Vegas pool filled with treated gray water. To qualify as gray, the water must come from non-sewage sources like showers and washing machines. Water recycled from sewage systems is called black water and cannot be used in pools.

"Let us nurture the urban forests that we have."



Angel Park, a public golf course in Las Vegas that's been open for more than 30 years, now uses non-potable reclaimed wastewater. In 2021, the Las Vegas Valley Water District voted to prevent any new golf courses from using water from the Colorado River.

hauled in from Scottsdale's water supply. But in 2022, Scottsdale announced that it would stop supplying that water. "There is no Santa Claus," declared Scottsdale Mayor David Ortega in a statement on December 9, 2022, echoing the kinds of warnings Las Vegas officials have been issuing for years. "The mega-drought tells us all—water is not a compassion game." Scottsdale later agreed to keep supplying water until the end of 2025, though it's bringing in that supply from outside contractors. Eventually, Rio Verde Foothills will find its own source of water.

CAMERON DONNARUMMA is a Las Vegas water-waste investigator, or "water cop," and he usually rolls out in his patrol car at 4 a.m., before residents power up their sprinklers. (Each address has a mandated watering time, which changes seasonally and is designed to minimize freezing and evaporation.) His job description, laid out on a flashy decal wrapped around the side of the car, is "to protect and conserve." Before the sun rises, he gets a firsthand look at the changing landscape of the Las Vegas Valley, where lush green plots have been replaced with rocks, succulents, flowering bushes and long, scrubby desert grasses.

In 2021, the Nevada Legislature required the removal of sidewalk and median turf by 2026. Yard signs mark patches of dry grass along sidewalks, curbs and artificial lakes. "This Turf Removal is mandated by State Law AB356," the signs tell residents. Once an emerald patchwork in the desert, the grass is no longer watered. It's on its way out, as are hundreds more acres of turf across the Las Vegas Valley, which gets about four inches of rain each year.

On a recent ride-along, Donnarumma flared bright amber strobe lights as he drove his car into a community in northwest Las Vegas. It was not long before he spotted a sprinkler run afoul. The violation was the most common issue he sees: water leaving the property and running

In Phoenix, water from the Central Arizona Project snakes through the city. The aqueduct sends about 1.4 million acre-feet of water 336 miles uphill from the Colorado River to supply roughly half the drinking water for Phoenix and all the drinking water for Tucson.

into the street. Since it was the household's first offense, it got off with a warning. Another violation will come with an $80 fine, doubling from there.

But speaking with a customer face-to-face is even better. "We're not here to be scary and to be bullies," he says. "We're here to educate customers."

Not everybody appreciates the lesson. One citizens' group, the Water Fairness Coalition, has appeared at recent county meetings to question for whom they are making sacrifices. Why should they forgo water to make room for growth? What about the farmers who use about 80 percent of the Colorado River, compared with the sliver Las Vegas gets? And what will happen to the old-growth trees?

Norm Schilling, a local landscaper and co-host of the show "Desert Bloom" on Las Vegas's NPR affiliate, sees this tension encapsulated in an old walnut tree. Standing in the front yard of one of his customer's homes in McNeil Estates—where older homes have lush landscapes—he points to a walnut tree flanked by grass. Schilling says its roots still need grass to survive. He worries that new excessive use fees could force residents to rip up healthy, shady trees and replace them with smaller, less mature trees—albeit more drought-resistant ones. Schilling wants the water authority to slow down, preserve existing trees, adjust fees more gradually and phase in change. "Let us nurture the urban forests that we have," he says. "And let us have a very thoughtful, timely transition."

Las Vegas water officials insist that their conservation plan is sound. To tree lovers like Schilling, they say that there are ways to keep trees alive without thirsty lawns and sprinkler systems—for instance, applying water directly to the tree's roots using a soil probe. They also say the rate

BYLINES

Photographer **Pete McBride**'s newest book—*The Colorado River: Chasing Water*—was published in March 2024.

Daniel Rothberg is a Nevada-based environmental reporter covering water, public land, energy and mining.

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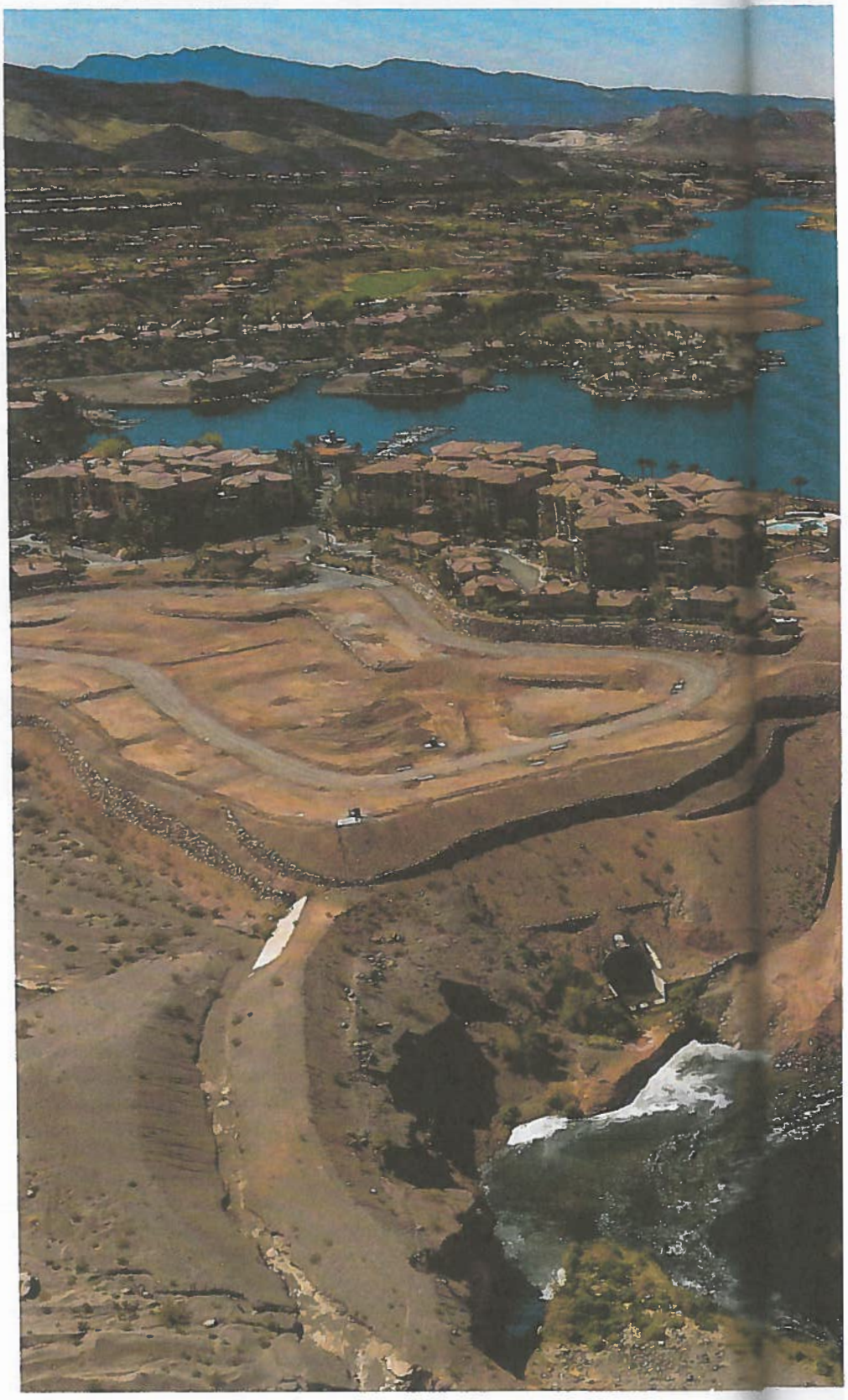


The Las Vegas Wash is a 12-mile urban river that connects the Las Vegas Valley with Lake Mead. More than 200 million gallons of water make their way through the wash each day, including groundwater, stormwater and runoff from city streets.

structure for water-usage fees is fair, noting that the top 10 percent of residential users consume most of the water. (The thresholds for single-family homes change each season, ranging from 14,000 gallons in winter to 28,000 gallons in summer, and residents have to pay $9 for every 1,000 gallons they go over the limit.) Last year, a water official said he couldn't imagine that "people would argue that their landscaping matters more than their neighbors do" if deep Colorado River cuts come.

From the sky, golf courses appear as a conspicuous exception, but even they have trimmed back. Golf courses in Vegas have a limited water budget, and that budget is tightening this year. Country clubs have been forced to pull out nonfunctional turf and make other big changes. Anthem Country Club, about 15 miles from the Las Vegas Strip, traded its original rye grass—which stays greener at cold temperatures—for Bermuda grass, which turns browner in the winter but requires less water.

The city is also paying close attention to commercial newcomers, making sure they'll be amenable to conservation. Recently, officials unveiled a tool to rank the expected water use of companies eyeing Las Vegas. The tool produces an overall water score that is then balanced with other factors like job creation and average salary. But that kind of strategic thinking isn't the biggest challenge officials say they face.

"I know it sounds simplistic to say, 'Making people change their behavior is the hardest part,'" says Entsminger, sitting in an executive office that overlooks the Las Vegas Valley. "But that's always the hardest part. Every group we talk to says, 'We fully support your conservation programs, but how do we get a carve-out for our little piece?'"

His response: "There's no silver bullet. This is a silver buckshot. Every single pellet is needed." ◆

Every group we talk to says, "How do we get a carve-out for our little piece?

ASU's Kyl Center experts lay out '10 tenets of water equity'

Report highlights the tricky balance between the right to clean water and the price of providing it

By Mary Beth Faller |

April 16, 2021

As everyone has focused on longer and more frequent hand-washing during the pandemic, the availability of safe, clean water has never been more important.

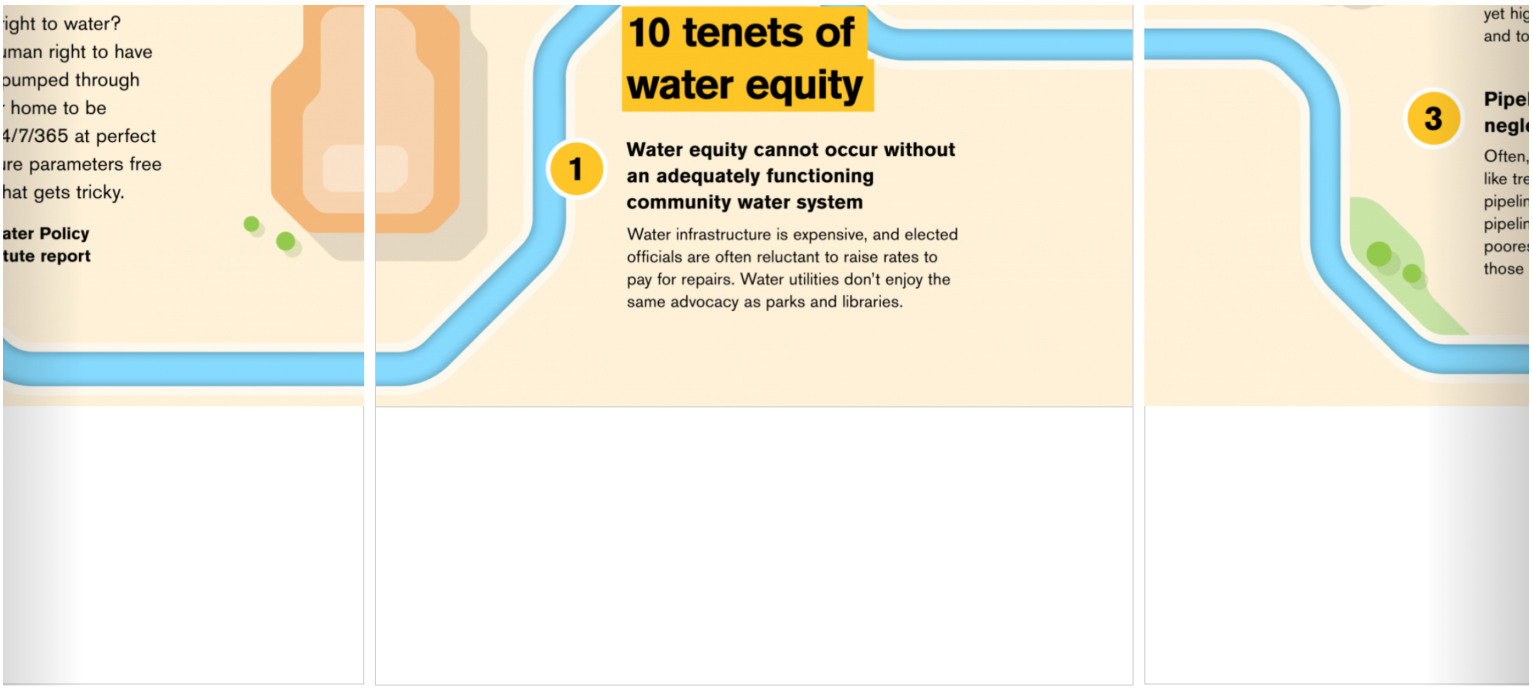
That necessity, coupled with the increasing awareness of social justice issues, has highlighted the topic of water equity, which was addressed in a new report by experts at Arizona State University.

"Ten Tenets of Water Equity: Considerations for Community Water Systems," which was released recently by the Kyl Center for Water Policy at ASU, lays out the tough balance between the need for clean water and the price of providing it.

"We hear people calling for water to be free and a human right. One of the strengths of this report is that it highlights how difficult it is to achieve that," said Sarah Porter, director of the Kyl Center for Water Policy, which is part of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

The report states: "Is there a human right to water? Sure. Is there a human right to have safe, clean water pumped through pipelines into your home to be available on tap 24/7/365 at perfect quality and pressure parameters free of charge? Well, that gets tricky."

Citing the U.S. Water Alliance, the Kyl Center report states that more than 2 million people in the U.S. live without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and water access issues disproportionately impact lower-income people, people of color, undocumented immigrants and people who do not speak English.



The 10 tenets of water equity are:

Tenet No. 1: Water equity cannot occur without an adequately functioning community water system. Water infrastructure is very expensive, and elected officials are often reluctant to raise rates to pay for repairs for fear that they won't be reelected. And although community members will advocate for funding for parks and libraries, few do so for water utilities.

Tenet No. 2: Rate structure matters. Water rates have to be affordable for ratepayers yet high enough to pay for repairs and to discourage waste.

Tenet No. 3: Pipelines cannot be neglected. Often, utilities will fix bigger infrastructure, like treatment plants, rather than pipelines. A problem at a treatment plant will affect many more customers than a neighborhood pipeline issue. But many of the worst pipelines are in the oldest and poorest neighborhoods, putting those residents at risk. It's also more expensive to replace a pipeline that has burst than to replace it proactively.

Tenet No. 4: Billing for multiple services undermines water security. Many communities combine water bills with other charges, such as recycling or energy, for efficiency. But that makes the overall bill harder to pay — and water shutoff more likely — for low-income people, even if they try to save water to lower their costs.

Tenet No. 5: Fees should be productive and not punitive. Utilities need fees to stabilize revenue and discourage water theft. But late fees can pile up, making it less likely that a poor family can pay an ever-growing bill and restore service. Water systems should consider waiving fees for qualifying customers.

Tenet No. 6: Customer service programs are essential. Utilities should have programs that find eligible customers and help them pay their bills. Customer ombudsmen who are trained to help customers avoid disconnects and access help from assistance programs can improve water security and build community trust.

Tenet No. 7: Community partnerships build water security. Water utilities should work with nonprofits and other groups to address poverty, making it more likely that everyone can pay their bills.

Tenet No. 8: Disconnection is sometimes necessary. Most utilities don't know whether a customer can't afford to pay, forgot to pay or just chooses not to pay. Some utilities have experimented with using low-flow devices that restrict flows to minimal levels, enough for basic hygiene, instead of disconnections for unpaid bills.

Tenet No. 9: Customer convenience enhances water equity. Utilities should allow customers to get information and pay their bills via phone call, email, web, mail, kiosk and in person, and should let people pay with cash. In a recent study on water equity, the city of Phoenix found that in the fiscal year 2018–19, nearly 40% of its service requests took place outside of standard business hours and that 4% of payments were in cash.

Tenet No. 10: Community representation is a must. Water utilities should do more to reach out to customers, through print materials, on the web, social media and neighborhood meetings

customers, through print materials, on the web, social media and neighborhood meetings.

One of authors of the report is Kathryn Sorensen, the director of research at the Kyl Center. When the ASU team was setting down the 10 principles, she drew from her experience as the former director of water services for the city of Phoenix, which has more than 7,000 miles of water pipeline.

“I want to highlight the first tenet, because that’s what it boils down to: You cannot have water equity unless you have a functioning community water system,” she said.

“It seems so obvious, but so many of the different trade-offs and issues when it comes to water revolve around that key point.”

So the tenets apply to existing community water systems, such as those in municipalities, and don’t address how to create equity where no system exists, such as for homeless people or in tribal communities, she said.

Many people think of municipal water systems as monolithic, Sorensen said.

“But even within the cities, there are very small water systems and some of them struggle with contamination issues, or financial stability. Some struggle with affordability in their water rates,” she said.

“I think you find all of the difficulties associated with water equity here in our community.”

Sorensen said she hopes the past year has given people a greater appreciation for the importance of a functioning community water system for public health.

“It’s a black box to so many people because you turn on the tap and forget about it,” she said.

Top image by Alex Davis/ASU News

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More Law, journalism and politics

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