

A Crisis of Their Own Making

The Washington County Water Conservancy District asserts that there is a water crisis in Washington County. If this crisis exists it is of their own making.

By putting the Lake Powell Pipeline project front and center in their water supply planning and until recently ignoring common sense water conservation measures, they now find that growth has outstripped readily available water supplies.

In the rush to find additional supplies WCWCD is engaging in the type of public relation campaign they used to promote the Lake Powell pipeline project. At a recent public forum on the proposed Dry Wash reuse water reservoir one of the first statements made was "Ivins is out of water." These are the same scare tactics heard years ago to justify the Lake Powell pipeline.

In fact, current water supplies as detailed in the Ivins city water master plan are adequate to serve the current population of Ivins city while allowing for limited growth.

Dry Wash reservoir is being promoted by WCWCD as a solution to an Ivins city water shortage by freeing up culinary water used for landscape irrigation with secondary reuse water. At this time there is extremely limited infrastructure in place to utilize any of the reuse water to be stored in the reservoir and full buildout of a secondary reuse water system by Ivins city is years and millions of dollars away. It is unknown if any of this water will ever be available to serve Ivins residents.

The reservoir plan, based on a 20-year-old environmental assessment, fails to take into consideration environmental, demographic, social, visual, and potential health concerns that did not exist when the 2004 environmental assessment, sponsored by WCWCD, was completed. As anyone who has witnessed the growth of Ivins and Washington County can attest, 20 years of growth has brought major changes that should require a supplemental environmental assessment be performed before construction moves forward.

In the 2004 environmental assessment the Dry Wash reservoir site underwent less scrutiny than the nearby Graveyard Wash site, which was the primary focus of the initial assessment. At the public meeting it was stated by WCWCD that Graveyard Wash will also be constructed but that it needs additional study. This additional study of the Graveyard Wash site should be undertaken before rushing to construct Dry Wash reservoir, something the WCWCD seems unwilling to pursue.

WCWCD is taking the quick and easy approach of building a reuse water reservoir within a residential community while ignoring citizen concerns about potential adverse effects to those who reside in Ivins.

Poor planning by the WCWCD should not subject the citizens of Ivins to a water project that would permanently destroy an area that has been designated open space in the general plan. The constant encroachment on the natural environment due to unrestrained growth means that the few remaining natural areas are and will become increasingly valuable as havens for wildlife and potential recreational opportunities as the city continues to grow.

Questions remain. Will the WCWCD make a legally binding commitment that Ivins city is guaranteed the equivalent residential connections that the proposed reservoir will create? Is Ivins ready to commit to maintaining a reservoir site that may not actually provide additional water for the city? These and other questions should be explored by your elected representatives before WCWCD changes the face of Ivins forever.

Work meetings are being scheduled with the City Council on the Dry Wash reservoir. I urge those with concerns to attend, listen to the presentations and let your voices be heard.

Richard Bryant
Ivins resident and concerned citizen