

QUICK FACTS

Remaining water rights:

50,000 acre-feet of Truckee River water rights and more than 19,000 acre-feet of creek rights remain for future conversion.

Total converted irrigation and groundwater water rights available for TMWA to use for the Truckee Meadows:

81,300 acre-feet

Potential drought storage:

22,000 to 32,000 acre-feet in upstream reservoirs

Use of Truckee River:

TMWA customers use only 3 percent of the water in the Truckee River in a non-drought year and 8 percent in a drought year.

Number of new Truckee River water rights:

None since 1944

Investment in new water facilities:

\$100 million since 2002 paid by developer fees.

THE WATER YOU SAVE IS NOT USED FOR GROWTH

Can the water we conserve everyday be used for growth - to build more houses or businesses?

The answer is no. Some people mistakenly believe that when our customers use less water through conservation, the water saved is used for growth. That is not what happens. Unused water is retained for our drought reserves or is released to benefit river system health. Reselling of conserved water to serve new houses or businesses does not occur.

If conservation makes more water available, why can't it be used for growth?

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) holds water rights dedicated to serving each business or home. At this time, the community and TMWA have chosen to use conserved water to increase drought storage availability and enhance instream flows in the Truckee River for wildlife purposes, and not reallocate any unexercised portion of water rights to serve additional customers. New growth must have new water rights to serve new homes and businesses.

Where does the water come from for new growth?

New developments must acquire water rights from a willing seller. Anytime someone wants to build a house, a subdivision, or a business, they must bring existing water rights to TMWA. In most cases, agricultural irrigation rights are purchased by developers and converted to municipal use for new projects.

The amount of Truckee River water available for use in the Truckee Meadows was determined by a 1944 court decree and has not changed. Developers generally purchase water rights that were originally designated for agricultural use and convert the use of the water rights for new homes and businesses. There is no increase in the amount of water that can be taken from the river. The only thing that changes is how the water is used.

What do water rights have to do with it?

A detailed topic paper on water rights is available. But, when people who own irrigation water rights decide not to use them any longer, they can sell them like any other real property. If they are sold to a developer, TMWA must then legally transfer the use to municipal purposes to serve new customers. Additional water is not diverted from the river and/or underground aquifers – it is the same amount of water, simply re-dedicated from agricultural use to municipal use.

Does growth pay for growth at TMWA?

Yes, it does. The development community pays for all new facility and water rights expenses related to growth when they want to build a new project. The TMWA Board of Directors instituted this policy shortly after TMWA was formed in 2001.

