

WATER IS OUR LIFE BLOOD

No one would argue that water is essential to our survival. Second only to air, water is needed to sustain life. Occasionally, we have too much water, but much of the time we don't have enough. Most watersheds are already over appropriated and there always seems to be some kind of legislative action to change state water management policy.

Over the years, Cache County and northern Utah has been blessed with adequate water of exceptional quality. That abundance is quickly becoming a scarcity, however, and competition for this limited resource is becoming intense. As populations grow and demands multiply, the ever-increasing value of water shares is almost frightening. Like most other water users, Cache residents are faced with difficult decisions regarding the development and use of our limited water resources.

A few years ago, when efforts were initiated to form a local Water Conservancy District, we were told it would be almost impossible to get the typical citizen involved. Obviously, we were unable to convince enough residents of the value of that move. Consultants told us that most users have no idea where their water comes from, and so long as there is water in the tap it is our nature not to be concerned. Unfortunately, that assessment has proven to be correct.

Several years ago, Cache County was given an allocation of 60,000 acre feet of "unappropriated" water from the Bear River System. Thus far, we have done nothing to put this allocation to beneficial use. Some have suggested that allocation is only as secure as another vote in the Utah State Legislature. We all know there are more votes in Weber, Davis and Salt Lake Counties than there are in Cache

Now, some selected Cache County delegates timidly attend meetings with entities like the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District (JVWCD), Bear River Water Conservancy District (BRWCD), and Weber Basin Water Conservancy District (WBWCD). The WCD's come with staff members, attorneys, engineers and directors who have created plans in detail. These entities are convinced that water management is a full time job.

WBWCD has studies showing their municipal water supply will be in deficit by 2018. There are big demand increases coming from their upper mountain valleys where water demand is far beyond earlier projections. JVWCD and WBWCD have already entered into agreements for the joint acquisition of lands and rights of way to take Bear River water to their service areas. Already, they have acquired land in West Haven City for a treatment plant. Thirty miles of right of way have also been acquired. These districts have the financial resources and expertise to be proactive. Cache County is still only talking.

I do not fault our County leaders for failing to be more pro-active in water management and development. They can only do what the electorate will allow them to do. Thus far, as citizens of Cache County, we have been unable to find agreement on the need for a water management entity, and certainly no unity of opinion on how such an entity would be established and directed.

County leaders recently engaged the services of Mr. Evan Olsen to meet with municipal leaders, irrigation companies, lay citizens and water experts in an effort to find common ground that will benefit the entire valley. He is meeting with Mayors and town councils on a regular basis, inviting their input on what type of water entity and water plan we should have in Cache County. Obviously, citizens are invited to be a part of these discussions. Agendas for public meetings are always advertised. Please attend, listen, discuss and act.

Already there is some opposition to this leadership endeavor and fear of another attempt to create a Water Conservancy District. If a WCD is not the answer, what is? Who does the State Water Engineer or representatives of the Division of Water Resources talk to when they need input from Cache County? If a WCD is good enough for the rest of the State, why do we need to continually explore options for some other kind of a water management entity? If there is a better way, why have we been so slow to identify it? Somehow, we think we are smarter than our friends to the south, but in reality, we have done little more than give lip service to water issues.

Dr. Peter Marshall, former U. S. Senate Chaplain, once prayed; "Save us from hotheads that would lead us to act foolishly, and from cold feet that would keep us from acting at all." We can be impulsive and reckless and we can be timid and miss limited opportunities. Hopefully we will be wise and prudent and make responsible decisions today that will have a positive impact on generations yet unborn. Perhaps we have wandered in indecision long enough.