

Valentine and reservoir teacups: Are they half full or half empty?

02/23/2023

Valentine and reservoir teacups: Are they half full or half empty?



February, the month we wonder if Punxsutawney Phil at Gobbler's Knob will see his shadow or not and predict the weather for the next six weeks. The stores also prepare to sell candies, cards, flowers, and we ponder where to dine with our significant other.

At our home, we have been on the lookout for the perfect box that can be prepared to receive cards and candy at school. I find it interesting to watch my kids wrestle with the idea of giving and receiving little notes with conversation heart candy notes on them.

The emotions of elementary school kids are especially interesting. Boys get a little nervous about the Manners Party, which in my youth was called the Valentine Tea. We had to dress up, wear our church clothes to school, and pull out the chairs for the girls and help them sit at the table. But we got a sugar cookie and got out of doing schoolwork, so it was a win.

The Parent Teacher Association would prepare a room with tables and chairs, nice tablecloths, the sugar cookie, and a cup of water that was half full.

As we get older, we look at things differently and we look forward to outings with our significant other and dressing up for the occasion. After taking a philosophy class or two,

we start questioning that half-full cup. Was that teacup half full or half empty?

Back in December, I wrote about how I was hoping for a white Christmas and how I watch the USDA SNOTEL website to see how much snow we are receiving in the mountains. We sure got plenty of snow this year. The snow levels are looking pretty good right now.

Northern Utah has 139% of normal snowfall and Southern Utah in the St. George area is at 199% of normal. Looks like we're out of the drought, right? I wish it were that simple. Dr. Burdette Barker, the USU extension irrigation specialist, has a fantastic site at irrigation.usu.edu that helps explain the situation.

If you visit the site, you will find a link for Utah Irrigation Information, which will take you to the water supply status page. You will find a link to a SNOTEL map and you will see the Utah Drought Monitor Map. As of Jan. 24, parts of Utah are still in extreme drought and the majority of Utah is still in severe drought. On the Utah Irrigation Information page, you see links to the reservoir status for Bear River Basin teacup diagrams under the links for the snowpack.

You will also find the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's teacup diagrams for other basins in Utah. The first two reservoir links show how full each reservoir is and how they contribute to each other. Newton is 19.87% full, Hyrum is 62.82% full, Cutler is 59% full, Porcupine is 52.8% full, Bear Lake is 36.43% full, Pineview is 43.3% full, Causey is 59% full, Willard Bay is 3% full, Lake Powell is 22.25% full, and Flaming Gorge is 68% full. It could be a good year to float the Oneida narrows this year with the reservoir at 95% full.

This combined information of the snowpack and reservoirs provides a more complete picture of the current water supply status, while such things as rainfall and soil moisture are depicted in the Utah Drought Monitor map. On this map, parts of Cache County are still in moderate and severe drought.

As spring arrives after the next six weeks (since Phil saw his shadow), hopefully, we see a slow spring warming and all that snow does not melt at once so the streams can hold all that snowmelt.

The reservoirs will begin to fill and those with the oldest water rights will fill first and then spill into the next reservoir. The reservoirs need that great snowpack we got this winter to supply the water needed for the 2023 growing season

Writer: Justin Clawson

Contact

Justin Clawson

justin.clawson@usu.edu

Questions?

Cache County Extension office

[435-752-6263](tel:435-752-6263)