

WITH THE CURRENT WATER ISSUES FACING CEDAR VALLEY, WHY DOES OUR COMMUNITY CONTINUE TO GROW?

Iron County Water Stewards

Answering Community Questions

Get to Know Your H2O: Central Iron County Water Conservancy District appreciates questions submitted by community members about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and local water needs. As part of its role as steward of water in Cedar Valley, the District is working with a group of experts, community members and elected officials to help prepare viable solutions for the future and to respond to community questions and concerns about emergent water issues.



ANSWERED BY:
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CICWCD BOARD MEMBER



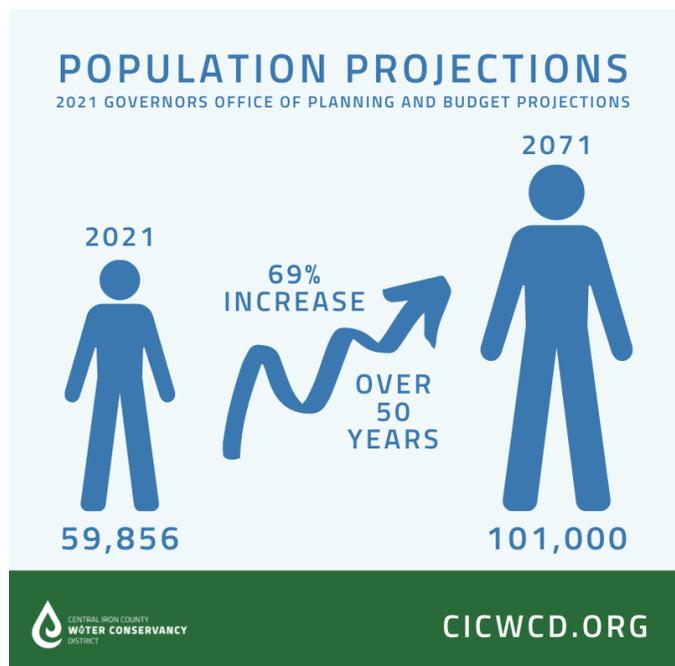
This week's community question is answered by Terri Hartley, member of the Cedar City Council and the District's Board of Directors. Hartley retired after 42 years at Wells Fargo, where she served as a Vice President and Business Banker. Hartley participated in the panel discussion during the District's recent community meeting.

Question: With the current water issues facing Cedar Valley, why does our community continue to grow?

Answer: Cedar Valley is a wonderful place to live, and the population has been and is increasing. If the cities and county were to impose a moratorium on building it could have a devastating effect on our local economy. Already inflated prices on homes would escalate even further due to the limited supply and would almost ensure our children would have to move elsewhere to obtain homes.

Construction is also a large part of our local economy, providing jobs, taxes and collection of impact fees to help us pay for infrastructure including water, such as the Pine Valley Water Supply Project.

In addition, property ownership and development is a right preserved by law. Rob Dotson, Enoch City Manager, spoke to this issue during the Dec. 7 community water meeting held at Southern Utah University. He was correct when he explained that the complexities of this issue are not managed in a vacuum, and the pressures of our economy and free enterprise play a role. Water rights are a big part of the development equation though, as there is only so much water available for use in our valley.



Currently Cedar City and surrounding communities own sufficient water rights for our present population and future growth, and no new developments within Cedar City are allowed unless the developer brings water rights to the city or pays for the city to purchase more rights. As long as policies are fair and well-thought out, growth and development pays for itself and helps existing residents pay for needed projects.

The complicated issue is our declining aquifer: the State Division of Water Rights determined we are overdrawing our underground water supply by approximately 7,000 acre-feet per year. We currently use an average of 28,000 acre-feet of water per year, while an average of 21,000 acre-feet per year is recharged into the aquifer.

In response to this, the State instituted a Groundwater Management Plan in 2021 that will start eliminating water rights based on priority dates later than July 1934. If our aquifer does not recover before cuts are made through the GMP, we will lose a large share of municipal water rights. It is clear that in addition to existing projects to conserve and optimize the water we have, we need to bring a new water supply to our basin to serve our current and future residents.

If we were to stop new growth, existing residents would be burdened with finding and paying for the full cost of the needed new water sources and projects for conservation, reuse and recharge. The secret is to keep a good balance of smart growth and infrastructure build-out.

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Several special interest groups have recently moved their focus to Cedar Valley water and have been spreading misinformation. The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District was created by a vote of Cedar Valley residents more than two decades ago. It has consistently been dedicated to developing and stabilizing the valley's water supply through conservation, recharge, reuse, and importing of water for the benefit of all current and future water users in the region. The District utilizes scientists, experts and professionals to understand the valley's underground aquifer and to determine responsible solutions for the community as it strives to meet local water challenges. For reliable information on the Pine Valley Water Supply Project specifically and the Cedar Valley's water situation in general, please visit <https://cicwcd.org/>. For more detailed information about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, please visit <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/1503915/570>.

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