

I'm hearing the term megadrought. What does this mean for Iron County?



ANSWERED BY:
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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.

This week's question from the community is answered by Paul

Monroe, Central Iron County Water Conservancy District General Manager.

Question: I'm hearing the term megadrought. What does this mean for Iron County?

Answer: Last summer the Cedar Valley was experiencing "exceptional drought," and with Southwestern Utah's snowpack at 35 percent of normal as of April 21, the drought has become even more long-lasting. On April 21, Gov. Spencer J. Cox declared a state of emergency due to the dire drought conditions affecting the entire state.

An April 17 article in the Scientific American magazine defines a megadrought as a severe drought lasting for two or more decades. The Southwestern United States is experiencing the driest period the region has seen in 500 years. The article cites a study that uses hydrological modeling and tree ring reconstructions of summer soil moisture to determine that we are currently in the second-worst drought since the start of the scientific record around 1,200 years ago.

"We've had a very volatile water year, and unfortunately, recent spring storms are not enough to make up the shortage in our snowpack," Cox said. "Once again, I call on all Utahns – households, farmers, businesses, governments and other groups – to carefully consider their needs and reduce their water use."

Cedar Valley must make water solutions an immediate priority. The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District has been working to ensure Iron County's water future since 1997, and in recent years has completed projects for aquifer recharge, helped convert agriculture fields to more efficient irrigation, and worked toward securing and delivering water from new sources.

The Pine Valley Water Supply Project, once approved by the Bureau of Land Management and local municipalities, can bring 15,000 acre-feet of water into the Cedar Valley and help provide relief to an already stressed and overdrawn underground aquifer. The project must also be combined with conservation, recharge, and reuse projects to ensure there is water for the future of our valley.

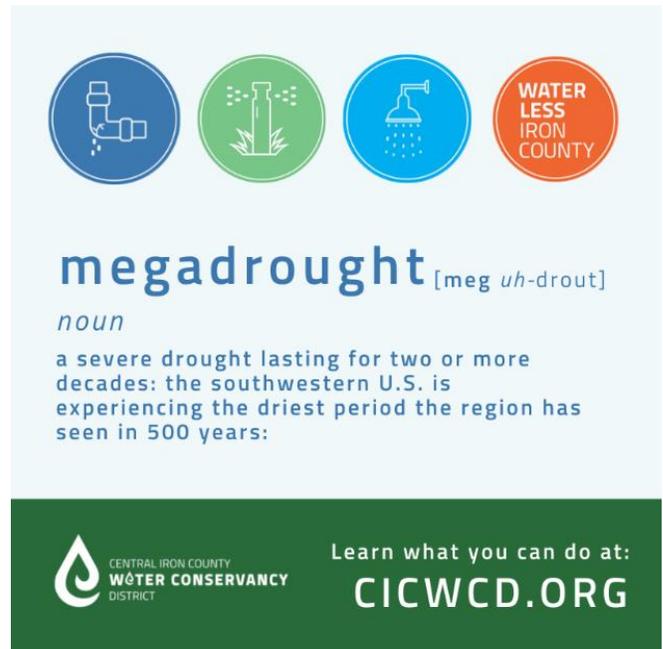
While the District, municipalities, and the county work to implement solutions, residents can make a difference by making lasting water wise changes in their daily lives.

Community members are asked to schedule free lawn water checks with the District and the USU Extension. By calling 435-865-9901, residents can request a visit from a staff member who will help them determine if they are watering appropriately for the health of their lawns and water conservation.

The District is also urging all property owners, whether individuals, businesses, or government organizations, to evaluate whether the lawn they are watering is useful. Patches of lawn that are not “played or laid on,” such as park strips, could be removed for a significant water savings. Those who would like to learn how to landscape their yards beautifully and optimize their outdoor water use are invited to take a Localscapes course. Course information is available at <https://cicwcd.org/localscapes/>.

Small changes to daily habits inside the home can also make a big difference. Don't leave the water running while you brush your teeth or shave. Only run full loads in the washer or dishwasher, or make sure to set your washer to the appropriate load size. Don't dump water down the drain that could be used for watering plants or cleaning. Eliminate any leaks and fix dripping faucets and running toilets. More ideas can be found at <https://cicwcd.org/conservation/>.

We can all make mindful water use a lifestyle. If each resident makes at least one simple daily change it can have a huge impact community-wide.



The infographic features four circular icons at the top: a blue circle with a faucet and water droplets, a green circle with a plant and water droplets, a blue circle with a showerhead and water droplets, and an orange circle with the text 'WATER LESS IRON COUNTY'. Below the icons, the word 'megadrought' is written in a large, bold, blue font, followed by the phonetic spelling '[meg uh-drou]' and the word 'noun'. A blue text block states: 'a severe drought lasting for two or more decades: the southwestern U.S. is experiencing the driest period the region has seen in 500 years:'. At the bottom, the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District logo is on the left, and the text 'Learn what you can do at: CICWCD.ORG' is on the right.

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>.

