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Water – One of our Competitive Advantages!

As we work to promote our region to companies looking to relocate or expand here, we usually highlight our many strengths: our strategic location, business friendly climate, lower cost of doing business (including lower taxes) and our exceptional quality of life. However one of our greatest competitive advantages is often an afterthought - our availability of water!

A week doesn't go by without a story in the news that highlights the great drought that most of the West is experiencing. More than 60% of the West is in some form of drought. The threat of shrinking reservoirs is also on the minds of water managers in Arizona, California, and Nevada, the three lower basins states that rely on Lake Mead. If the surface elevation of Mead, the nation's largest reservoir, drops below 1,075 feet, water restrictions for Arizona and Nevada kick in. As of May 11th it is at 1,093 feet, down 10 feet in just the last 6 weeks. Yet that is better than several of the reservoirs in California, like Almaden Reservoir and Folsom Lake which have essentially gone dry.

The message is simply that in the Southwest there is more demand for water than what is available; that is *except here in Reno-Sparks*. While most of the West is developing increasingly strenuous water restrictions in an effort to preserve their shrinking supplies of water, we are blessed with a supply of water that exceeds our demand. Even in these severe drought conditions all customer water demands in Reno-Sparks will be met this summer according to the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA).

Thanks to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Lake Tahoe and the Truckee River, *we have plenty of water to meet our current and future needs*. We are now several years into the current drought, where snow pack is significantly below average, yet our two primary drought storage reservoirs (Independence and Donner Lakes) are full and available to make sure our water supply needs are being met.

What this means for economic development is that a company that is a low or moderate water user *does not have to worry about access to water or unreasonable price increases in the future* like they would in most other places in the Southwest. This dependability of an important resource like water is critical to some companies and important to most. Yet we often allow the media hype and dire reports of drought to overshadow the reality that *"we are special"* when it comes to communities in the Southwest because we have plenty of water now and for the future to meet the needs of our community – water that will help to fuel the growth of our region for many years to come.

That does not mean we can be careless or irresponsible with this valuable resource. We encourage high water users to look at other locations while water conservation is critical to sustaining our resources in the years ahead. It is just nice to know that as the drought lingers on; our community is postured for success thanks to years of planning, responsible management and the proximity of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.