



THE TAOS NEWS

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Forty-year plan says town water use could rise up by 80 percent

By J.R. Logan

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The town of Taos is considering the adoption of a new, 40-year water plan that offers predictions for how much water the town will need in the future and how it would meet that demand.

A draft of the report says the town now serves about 1,700 homes and 580 businesses. For water, the report says the town relies on nine wells. In 2013, the town pumped about 254 million gallons of water. On average, each residential customer consumed about 64 gallons per day.

Homes accounted for 35 percent of that use, while 61 percent of the water went to commercial users. The remaining 4 percent was pumped from town-owned wells at places like the airport, water treatment plant and town parks.

The report describes the quality of groundwater in Taos as “generally acceptable,” but it points out septic systems have been found to impact groundwater quality. The report says there are about 1,900 septic tanks in the area surrounding the town limits. An estimated 134,000 gallons of wastewater goes into those septic systems each day.

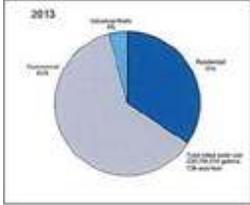
The report notes there is “uncertainty” regarding future water demands in Taos proper. The report relied on “low-growth” and “high-growth” projections to get a ballpark idea.

In the low-growth scenario, the population of Taos would grow to over 8,000 people by 2050, while the population spiked to almost 12,000 in the high-growth scenario. The report called the high-growth model “more likely,” though so far, the actual population of the town is closer to the low-growth model.

Based on that growth, the report said water demand could go from about 1,000 acre-feet a year to between 1,300 and 1,800 acre-feet by 2050.

Part of that future demand will be met by funding and water rights provided through the Abeyta Water Rights Settlement, which is inching its way toward final authorization.

The town council was set to adopt its 40-year plan at its meeting last week, but it chose to delay a vote until a future meeting.



A draft of the town of Taos' 40-year water plan shows historic water use by type of customer. According to this chart, most of the water in the town's system goes to commercial customers. The "individual wells" category includes water pumped from town wells at various parks, the airport and other facilities.