

My Turn

It is up to us to protect water, sacred community

By Jeffrey M. Allen II

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Dearest Taos Valley Community: I've been scared to publicly address this until now.

Where did all the water go this year?

Will this drought end, or is this the beginning of the end for a healthy community watershed that is now under threat due to extreme climatic changes, both human-engineered and Mother Nature-driven?

The deep water mitigation wells proposed for our rivers and ditches under the Abeyta Settlement are an outright attack on the holy water that flows through our valley, rests beneath our feet and nourishes life far beyond our shortsightedness.

Imagine deep punctures drawing up toxic fossil water from our Holy Mother's womb, then purifying it with systems that are millions of dollars to build and maintain, then releasing it into our rivers and ditches for fancy toilet flushing and 5-bedroom homes on subdivided agricultural land.

Imagine all that precious water taken from Her womb; then imagine what She is going to do when it's nearly gone, and the watershed is owned (and then abandoned) by an Enron-like water privatization corporation because they are the only ones that can afford to build and maintain these community water-mining systems.

Am I an alarmist? Yes, I am.

We have good reason to be alarmed into action.

I am ringing the alarm that our Taos Valley community is in big trouble if we do not act now on these deep water mitigation wells planned for our rivers and ditches.

It is our personal responsibility as the Taos Valley community to protect and preserve the treasures we have been blessed with here. These lands and waters are a sacred trust that is being broken by greed and, ultimately, lack of awareness.

Our community is a sacred trust that will be determined by what we choose to leave behind.

If we are to hold the land, water and community as sacred as Taos Pueblo does (where the Red Willow people can still drink from their rivers, and where they have fought so hard to maintain culture, ancestral lands and headwaters), then we have some lessons to learn and some positive work to do together.

Who will own this water when we cannot pay as a community to maintain these deep water mitigation well systems that are proposed to feed our rivers and ditches?

Who will pay for the consequences inflicted by past generations' blunders?

Who will show up to make sure we don't make the same mistakes in the Taos Valley that every other branded town confuses for true?

The Upper R'ò Grande community is the realest place I know. We are diverse and resilient. We know how to be humble. We know how to show respect. We know the land and the water are the best ingredients to grow healthy community. I've never met so many dear people rooted here in true ways, spending days on hands and knees honoring this land and the freedom of expression and connection we have here. This place is sacred. Home is sacred. This place deserves our respect, our attention and our commitment to preservation and deep restoration.

We have what it takes to lead the way in sustainable and regenerative practices that help us better prepare for the extreme climate disruption we are now experiencing.

We are at a crossroads, friends.

What will we do to confront the challenges ahead?

Will we leave the water in selfish hands and witness the death of everything that we treasure here?

Or, will we gather together to honor all the cultures and traditions that make our community great, while recognizing and turning from the myths that have nearly decimated all that is sacred?

Taos Pueblo: Thank you for protecting the water for future generations. Thank you for offering your example of watershed stewardship. Thank you for allowing me to be a guest on your aboriginal lands that I revere.

We need your help, Red Willow People, otherwise this place will disappear and the water will disappear once it leaves your land. We need to learn from your example. Thank you for showing us how to live in one place forever and not destroy it.

Taos Pueblo, dear community of the Taos Valley and Upper R'ò Grande: help us save Taos now! Help us remember our place of responsibility in maintaining and restoring these lands and waters that are a blessing calling out now for respect.

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