

Conserving for whom?

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By Harv Teitelbaum

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The west is in a drought. Along with other measures being recommended or required, we've been asked to conserve water. Great. It's good to conserve. After all, being frugal, dependent on less, and keeping one's environment uncluttered and unpolluted do far more to enhance quality of life than do frantic consumption and the over accumulation of stuff.

But I have two questions.

First, for what and for whom are we conserving?

The drought has forced many communities to issue mandatory water restrictions. Some have even had to truck in bottled water to meet basic needs. But not everyone is truckin' in the same direction.

Take Douglas County, Colorado, development capital of the nation, where recently there was some exciting news. Mammoth bones were unearthed at an excavation site. But what was also uncovered was the fact that the frenzied addition of water taps continues unabated. People were encouraged in the reports to contemplate the extinction of the woolly mammals. My guess is that it was early DougCo hominids' plundering of the mammoths' water supply to green up acres of proto-bluegrass that caused the beasts' extinction, not climate change or overhunting.

While we're dealing with a near-empty glass, developers want to sell more straws. One thing is certain. As water shortages become a way of life, we will be forced to find new water sources. Politicians will wait for the right time to propose it waiting, perhaps, until drinkable water becomes scarce. Then they'll throw up their hands and "reluctantly" offer a solution: more dams and reservoirs. They know that public sentiment can waffle, but the profit and pressure to continue growth, as well as the need to finance elections, remain constant.

Question number two: "Then what?" After we build more containments, build more houses to suck up any additional water, and confront the inevitable next drought, then what?

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We're driving around on a tire with a slow leak. We could stop and put some air in the tire, but then what? Do we continually refill the tire while the leak gets bigger and bigger? Or do we stop the continuous drain? At least we can find air to fill the tire. Additional containments of little or no water provide little or no long-term solutions. No matter. They represent more major development projects, greased with a little campaign support.

There's a bigger lesson here, though. Continuing development during droughts demonstrates that conservation on one level may only serve to encourage waste and the exploitive use of resources on another level. Consider that when we recycle, instead of reducing the need for landfills, we might just be opening up more acreage for Wal-Mart's and subdivisions. When we push for more public transportation, instead of alleviating congestion, we might just be creating more available volume capacity for land speculators.

The problem may be that we see conservation only as a personal choice or fashion. But to be truly effective, we might have to apply it throughout all levels of society, not as fashionable behavior, but as internalized ethic. We might need to think beyond personal recycling and every-third-day-watering to such notions as conservation of land use, conservation of quality of life, conservation of surface and ground water, and conservation of climate. We might need to value restraint in physical expansion, restraint in personal transportation, restraint in gratification, and restraint in resource consumption.

Do we dare consider freezing the addition of new water taps and making future taps conditioned on sustainable supplies? What a bold notion: to use conservation not to put the squeeze on individuals to cough up resources for industry, but to make our lives easier.

It's always difficult to draw a line at a particular point, but that doesn't mean a line shouldn't be drawn at some point. After all, the west's land and resources are not unlimited. If we use them up, then what? Have we reached the point where we consider drawing that line? While there are still some things left to conserve?

Harv Teitelbaum writes about the environment, politics, social issues and ethics, from a systems perspective. Visit his website at <http://www.thequestioner.com>

Brighten Your Path By Installing Decorative Landscape Lighting

By Mike Yeager

Landscape lighting can add a beautiful quality to any home. There are many choices available to someone who is considering it. Landscape lighting, and any outdoor lighting, can help protect a home as well as keep people from stumbling in the yard. Mainly, people purchase landscape lighting to enhance the appearance of their yard or landscaping.

There are many types of landscape lighting. You can purchase low voltage landscape lighting is recommended if you are interested in conserving energy. Another option to conserving energy is solar landscape lighting. Solar, or from the sun, is powered from the sun's rays. It stores energy during the

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day while the sun is out and then, at night, when it is dark, they are lit using this saved energy. They give off a faint glow that really can light up a little area or large area. These types of outdoor landscape lighting can be great ways to light your yard cost efficiently.

If you are considering doing work on your landscaping, consider landscape lighting design. Designing a beautifully light yard can be tough work, but there are professionals that can help you. For example, something that can be done is light a walkway to the front steps to your home or line the driveway with lights from the street to your garage. Maybe you would prefer to focus your lights on a single bush or tree that is special in some way or to shine on a flag.

When considering landscape lighting, ensure that you think of safety first. Consider speaking with a professional to help you design what you would like your yard to look like. Consider as well using energy efficient landscape lighting such as solar or low voltage. Landscape lighting can add beauty and charm to a home when it is done properly and safely.

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