

I would like to start this article by thanking my grandfather, who worked as a public works director in Santa Rosa. It was through his teaching that I realized that infrastructure is crucial to the sustainability and vitality of a community because it is involved in every aspect of our lives. We cannot ignore this essential component that is vital to life.

Influenced by my grandfather, I became aware of the importance of basic infrastructure. When I was the mayor of Santa Rosa, I focused on water, wastewater treatment and community infrastructures. Over the last thirty years serving in the New Mexico Senate, I have continued to focus on these issues. In the early days, I proposed cloud seeding and drawing pipelines from out-of-state water sources. More recently, I have led initiatives to secure funds to improve the Bradner Dam in Montezuma and many acequias, such as the Acequia Madre in Las Vegas.

Putting the focus on the issues at hand, New Mexico is in an ongoing drought and has monsoons, wildfires and floods. Though these are urgent, we can use recent windfall funds to improve infrastructure, achieve better water quality and provide a steady supply of available resources. This will help future growth and economic development, improve quality of life and better help those who work from home.

The current situation in New Mexico is that there is a need to recover from the damage caused by wildfires as well as the efforts to reduce them. The trash and pollution have overwhelmed and burdened ranchers, farmers and counties within the state. But the need to restore, rebuild and upgrade equipment requires a lot of money. The restoration is also delayed by lack of productivity, inefficiency and other issues, so it behooves us to take action as soon as possible. We need to use new technologies to save water and strategically plan the use of money to effectively support the completion of the project.

I believe that New Mexico has a strong potential for recovery. If we work together and use the resources we already have, we can extend the lives of our urban and rural water systems. We can now use filtration systems to protect Las Vegas's drinking water and retain Storrie Lake water for distribution to agriculture and domestic use. The Peterson Dam, Lake Maloya reservoir, Santa Rosa Power Dam, Conchas Dam and Maxwell water system are areas that particularly need assistance in increasing water conservation.

We can also take a course of action that prioritizes the water needs of the state's reservoirs, which the Office of the State Engineer has identified as needing improvement. I implore you: improve communication between the federal government, the state government and the region. Provide adequate funding for water projects. Educate young people, the public and small business owners about water solutions and water compacts. Develop educational programs and internships to educate future engineers, architects, urban planners and landscape architects. Provide them with well-paying jobs, and encourage them to make water conservation a lifelong aspiration.

Water is life; it is linked to health and quality of life. The number one action we can take right now to increase the quality of life for our people is to improve access to clean water.

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