

Pasadena Water and Power Scholarship Essay

Despite how vital it is to our daily lives, most people rarely think about where the water we rely on comes from. We often take for granted the fact that clean water will always come out whenever we turn on the faucet. However, due to water shortages caused by intensifying droughts in California, we might not always have such easy access to water. It is for this reason that we need to be cognizant of how our water supply is managed as well as take steps to ensure that our water supply is maintained sustainably.

Climate change has had a profound effect on water supply in both Pasadena and California as a whole. According to Pasadena Water and Power, approximately 40% of our water is sourced locally from the Raymond Groundwater Basin, with the rest being imported from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The MWD gets water from the Colorado River and Northern California, primarily from the Sierra Nevada snowpack. However, the Colorado River is diminishing due to overallocation and the Sierra Nevada snowpack is becoming less reliable due to warmer temperatures causing precipitation to come in the form of rain rather than snow. This means that in the future, we will likely have to become more dependent on water from the Raymond Groundwater Basin, which itself has been being pumped at a rate faster than it can be replenished. Because of this, it is vital that we implement measures to increase the amount of water in our local reservoir and conserve what we already have.

Although some of California's supply shortage has been alleviated by the recent deluge, the state remains in severe drought. Most of the water from the storms of the past few months has flown directly to the ocean due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and limitations in how much water the landscape can absorb. This highlights the need to establish a more robust water

storage system and invest in stormwater capture programs that allow to capitalize on times when precipitation is high.

Pasadena has already begun making efforts to address our water supply shortage and establish sustainable methods to both conserve and capture water. In 2021, the Pasadena City Council approved a proposal to adopt an alternating watering schedule that “restricts outdoor watering to two days per week from April to October and one day per week from November to March.” This, along with attempts to educate residents about water conservation, will significantly cut down on water usage and help preserve the city’s limited water supplies. In addition, the city also proposed the Washington Park Stormwater Capture Project earlier this year, which seeks to “divert water from the eastside storm drain, filter the water through a pre-treatment unit, and run it to an underground system that will provide storage and groundwater recharge.” This will allow the park to collect runoff that would otherwise be lost to the ocean as well as increase on-site native vegetation.

In conjunction with simple actions such as fixing leaks, taking shorter showers, and turning off the faucet while brushing teeth, these initiatives and policies can help us both save and acquire significant amounts of water. Although the changes brought on by the onset of climate change will continue to impose challenges, it will be possible to provide for the city’s water needs as long as we continue to make a concerted effort to sustain our local water supply. Ultimately, it is necessary to work together as a community to ensure a sustainable and reliable water supply for future generations.

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