



### Editorial: Dry spell ahead calls for plan today

#### THE HERALD'S VIEW

The Monterey County Herald

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Along a narrow band of land clinging to the Central California coast, the hills today are just green enough to trick us into thinking we have had enough rain to sustain us.

Do not be fooled.

For the truth, fly over the inland foothills or drive just a few miles to the east and watch as the green gives way to yellow and then, quickly, to brown or a lifeless tan closer to gray.

Prepare to be disappointed if you head into the Salinas Valley and then south past Soledad and King City. The hills on either side of the valley should have that soft, green coat that usually lasts a few very short months before slowly fading to gold for the summer. Not this year. The green came and went before we noticed. Soon the pumps will come on and the vineyards will be green again. For now, though, it is the dead of winter and it looks it.

Once again, we have failed to escape the cycle of wet years followed by drought and, again, we act surprised. Again, we have done little administratively, politically or financially to prepare our collective self for rationing orders and odd-even watering — if there is to be watering at all.

The good news is that we have enjoyed the lovely weather this winter, telling ourselves this is what it is like in Santa Barbara or San Diego. We've made

extra trips to the beach. Some of us didn't bother with changing windshield wipers this season or finding the umbrellas. From that standpoint, it has been delightful.

But the washed-out hills tell us there will be a large price to pay. More than a third of the normal Sierra snowpack is missing, and so is two-thirds of the water that should be in Lake Shasta and San Luis Reservoir. Our water comes from sources closer to home, but that won't do us any good at all unless the weather cooperates and soon and then cooperates some more.

The forecasters tell us to look for a couple of days of rain at the end of the week, but that will do little more than extend our denial for several more days.

In other words, it is time to prepare. Otherwise, before we know it, it will be July and we will be looking at our withered bushes and scorched lawns and wondering why we didn't pull out some of our thirstiest plants and replace them in February.

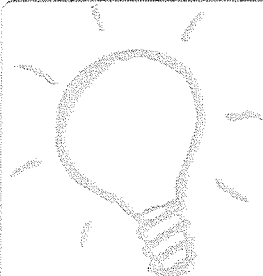
We'll wonder why we didn't spread some mulch. Why we didn't install drip irrigation and cisterns and low-flow appliances, while they were still in stock.

We'll wonder why we ever thought that March would be our salvation.

We'll wonder what made us think we could put it all off for another time.

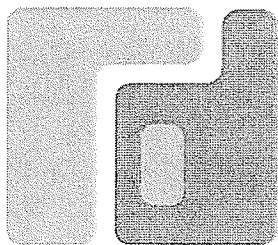
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