

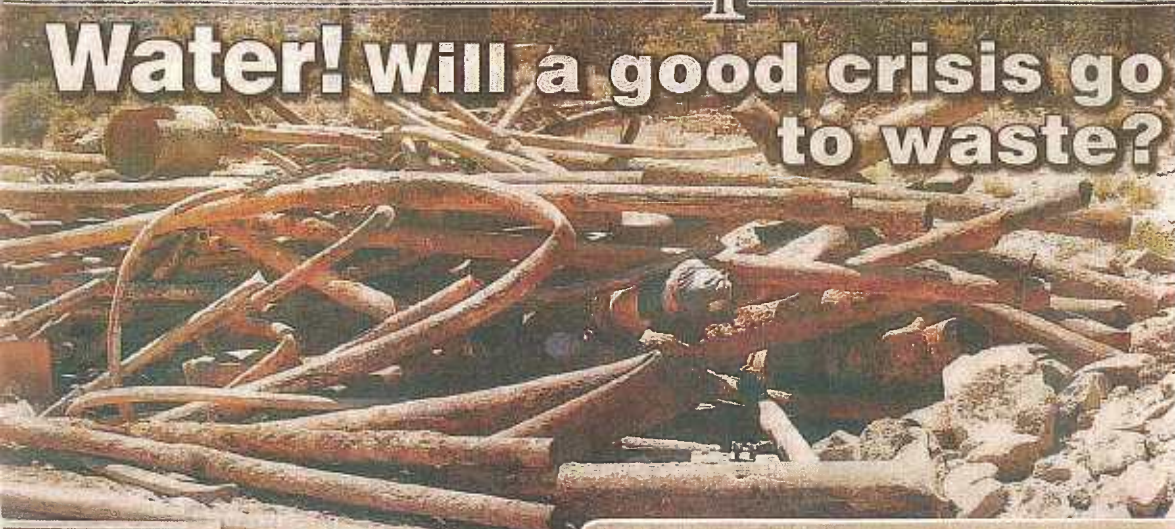
The Voice of the Mountain Communities Since 1966

The Mountain

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Enterprise

Water! Will a good crisis go to waste?



This pile of corroded, leaking and undersized pipes was pulled out of an area being updated in Frazier Park. There are still many others to be replaced, along with new wells and updated meters.

By Patric Hedlund, TME
"Never let a good crisis go to waste," Winston Churchill said. Our five year drought brought a serious crisis to this region.

When Lake of the Woods' wells went virtually dry in 2012, emergency funds suddenly became available from state and federal sources. LOW's water board exhausted all possible efforts to solve the problems themselves, but were not successful in locating a viable well site in their district. Emergency water hauling was paid for by the state until recently. A state board of health demand letter was sent telling the LOW water company they are required to find a suitable permanent source of water for the people they serve.

Next, in 2013, the state made more funds available to help water systems on this mountain research and solve long-standing water problems here, but only if water systems are willing to work together.

In 2014 LOW and the Frazier Park Public Utilities District accepted funding to

investigate what working together might look like. On February 4, 2016 votes from LOW's water customers were counted, showing they are willing to join into a regional water system with FPPUD.

Now it is the customers of Frazier Park's water system who need to gather the facts they need to understand what
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Water! Will a good crisis go to waste?



This corroded and leaking water pipe is like many that still need to be replaced in the FPPUD system.

But it will be too expensive to do that without grants. Becoming partners with Lake of the Woods makes Frazier Park eligible for 100% grants rather than taking on debt to upgrade the FPPUD system.

Waiting may not be an option. The state money may be gone if the request for funding is not submitted in 2016.

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the stakes are. In March they will be polled about becoming part of a regional system.

Those who attended a public information meeting Thursday, Feb. 18 came away with many of the facts they need. But as they were leaving, several said they are afraid that absentee landlords and residents who did not attend may not be paying attention.

They said owners of rental properties may not be aware that the crisis for Frazier Park's water system is not over until funding is secured to update their 90-year-old system.

Currently, Frazier Park Public Utility District needs to repair or replace three wells and replace additional distribution pipes to create sustainable, uniform pressure throughout the system. They also need to purchase modern meters that will lower labor costs and be more accurate.

Updating the infrastructure will add value

to all real estate on the mountain, several who attended the meeting said. Not doing so will erode property values.

Self-Help Enterprises consultant David Warner said that state funds that are available to regional systems now, because of the crisis, may not be there later if application is not made soon. Communities all around the state are facing similar challenges. Right now FPPUD and LOW have an inside track

to secure funding, but not if they wait another year, he said.

The boards of the Frazier Park Public Utilities District, the Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Lake of the Woods Mutual Water Company, Lake of the Woods Mobile Village and several other private well owners see this as an opportunity to do updates together as a regional system that seemed impossible to afford to do alone.
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