

Abilene Reporter News

## **Rain alone can't solve our problems**

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Admittedly, more than four inches of rain fell between Aug. 7 and Aug. 17 last year and this year the same period has seen less than a quarter of an inch.

That's still a poor excuse for the current levels of water use across our city. We are using at least 10 million gallons a day more than we did at this time last year. Four inches isn't *that* much rain.

Abilenians' water use is now governed under the Year Round Water Use Management that permits twice-a-week watering of lawns. If the city's principle water source, Lake Fort Phantom, falls more than 10 feet below its spillway, then watering is restricted to once a week. As of Thursday, it was 7.6 feet below the spillway and was at 64 percent of its capacity. Lake Ivie, a water source we share with five other cities, was at 43 percent capacity. And Hubbard Creek Lake, shared with three other communities, was at 53 percent capacity.

Over the last several years, the city has encouraged conservation through educational programs and through restrictions. Yet, obviously we continue to believe we can leave the spigot on. At the risk of repetition: our city government needs to help us help ourselves.

The city council should draft ordinances that would offer incentives for reducing our water use, incentives such as those seen in cities like San Antonio, Phoenix, Albuquerque and Denver. They all offer some form of rebates for the purchase of water-saving appliances and for xeriscaping. San Antonio offers \$1000 cash awards to neighborhoods that xeriscape. West Texans who have survived all manner of highs and lows should be able to develop other, more creative lures. And we should be permanently restricted to once a week lawn watering.

Arid West Texas is never going to have so much rain that we can be blase about our water usage. Rain is merely an interlude in a continuous drought.

Let's all agree to quit using water unnecessarily-even Bermuda grass only needs watering once a week-and let's ask our elected officials to demonstrate the leadership necessary to conserve our fragile water supply.

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