

Thank you Val for that introduction, I think.

Ten years ago I worked at the Water Resources Research Center and had a front-row seat at the creation of Water CASA. In the early days it was a bit like watching sausage being made, but ever since, Water CASA has proven that a good idea, combined with dedicated individuals, can accomplish amazing things. Congratulations!

When Val called last spring, I eagerly agreed to speak today, and didn't even flinch when she said, "Oh and by the way, I want you to be provocative." Unfortunately, I think Val knows me a little too well.

We tossed around some potential subjects, and finally agreed that I would try to tackle this question that always comes up when talking with the public

Why Conserve When You just Keep Building?

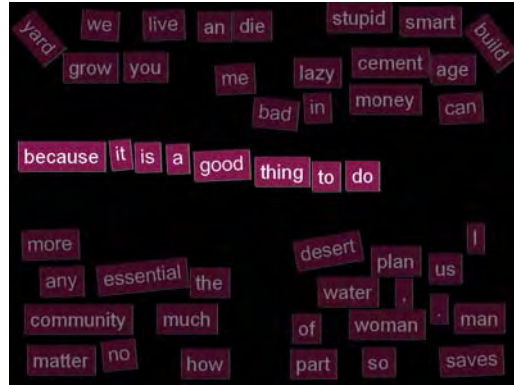
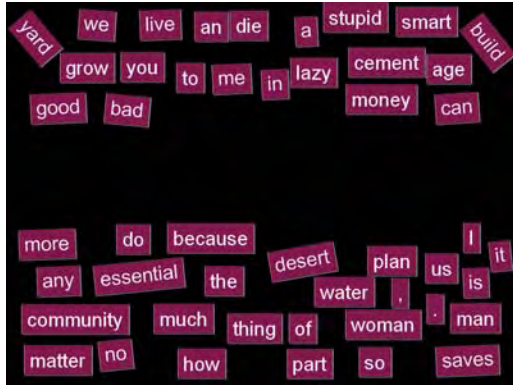
Though usually the phrasing is a bit more direct



Of course this question actually transcends water conservation, and is part of a much larger set of issues. And frankly sometimes it is asked as a rhetorical question, designed to simply poke the recipient in the eye. But I figured this question deserved to be addressed head-on, and perhaps more thoroughly than it is usually handled.

So I began by jotting down some answers off the top of my head. Then I Googled it for a few more, and then I asked my staff the same question, and I added a few more. None of them were unexpected, though perhaps the most revealing response I got from one of my staff was "God, I HATE that question!" Yeah, me too.

But I kept working on my list, and after a while a bunch of common words and phrases emerged and the responses started to fit into some loose categories.



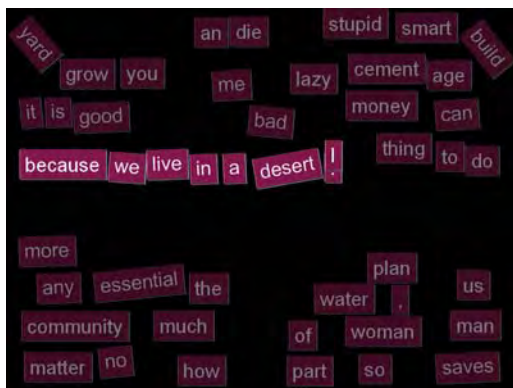
This first answer appeals directly to a sense of community responsibility.

Common variants include

“It’s the right thing to do”

“It is the responsible thing to do”

This answer puts conservation within the context of social norms that govern much of our daily behavior. And this reason is fine, though it is worth noting that it doesn’t directly address the linkage to growth. More on that in a bit.

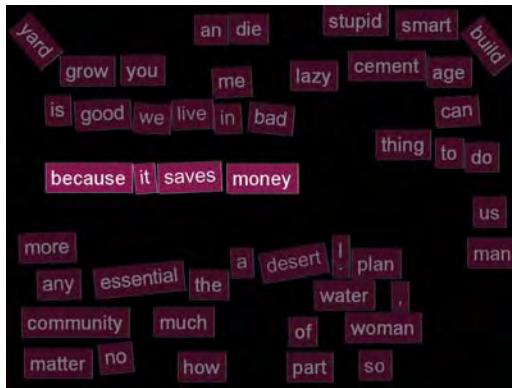


This next answer ties conservation to the environment and a sense of place.

I suspect more than a few of us have 6th-generation photocopy of Fitz’s classic cartoon that illustrates this point.

In this view there is an implicit recognition of water scarcity and the fragility of our unique ecosystem. And

there is a slight whiff of condescension in the answer too. As if to say, “Duh, look around!”

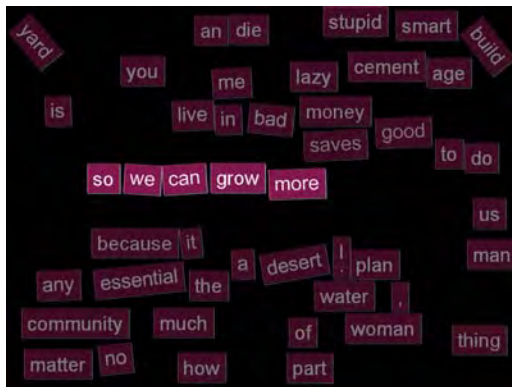


There are also answers that are a bit more calculating in their appeal to self-interest.

This one carries none of the emotional baggage of the previous responses, and has the potential to attract a different set of respondents. Of course, the issue of cost doesn't occur in a vacuum—part of

the reason conservation saves money is because many rate structures are designed to amplify this effect.

And other times it is the utility itself that is trying to save money. Conservation saves the money that it would take to acquire new supplies, or maybe even just to meet peak demand. But that's OK, this is a good, practical reason to save water.



And then there is the Naked Emperor answer. In fact, when we were working on my list, a staff member actually whispered this one to me, for fear of, well I'm not sure what. Perhaps being arrested by the Water Cop!

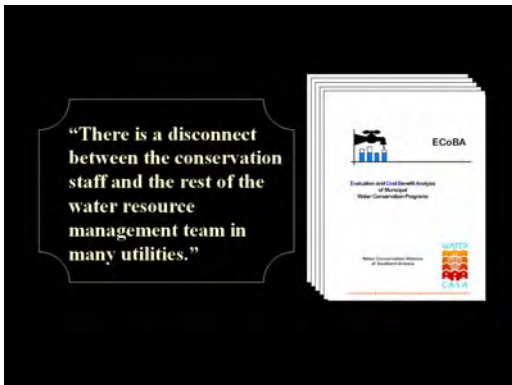
This is clearly a provocative answer, but it is really just a variant of a response that you hear fairly

commonly—“We should conserve so we can stretch our available supplies.” That doesn't say what we are stretching them for, but in the next breath you often hear people say things like “growth is inevitable” and “you can't stop people from coming here.” So I think it is pretty clear what we are all talking about.



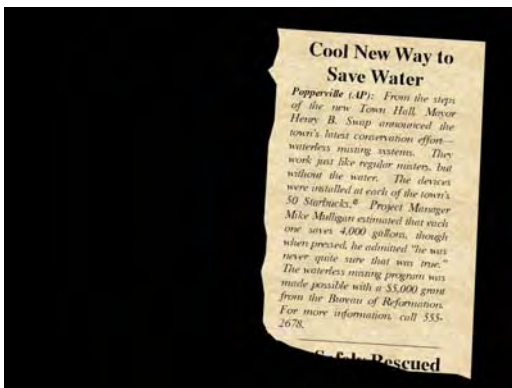
Now all of these answers have a degree of validity, but personally they tend to leave me rather unsatisfied. In fact, some of those earlier answers downright irritate me.

So I tried to get in touch with my inner-cynic to figure out why I felt this way, when I remembered something I'd read in Val's ECOBA study. Now for the life of me I can't remember any of the actual *results* of that study, or even the difference between a toilet *rebate* program and a toilet *incentive* program, but there was something in there about views on conservation. Yeah, there it is...



“There is a disconnect between the conservation staff and the rest of the water resource management team in many utilities.”

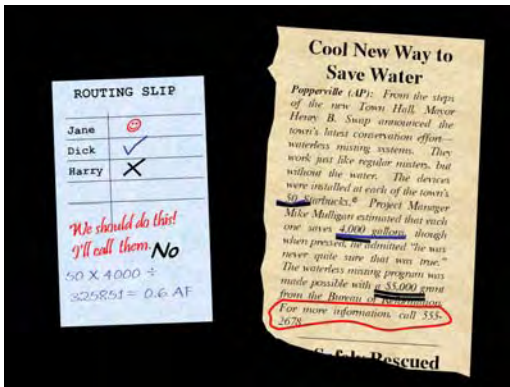
Val didn't go into much detail on this, but it struck me as a critically important insight. In fact I had it in mind when I ran across an old newspaper article from the Popperville Press.



It is a little bit small, so let me read it to you.

From the steps of the new Town Hall, Mayor Henry B. Swap announced the town's latest conservation effort—waterless misting systems. They work just like regular misters, but without the water. The devices were installed at

each of the town's 50 Starbucks. © Project Manager Mike Mulligan estimated that each one saves 4,000 gallons, though when pressed, he admitted "he was never quite sure that was true." The waterless misting program was made possible with a \$5,000 grant from the Bureau of Reformation. For more information, call 555-2678.



Now the really interesting thing about this article is what happened when it was routed internally at the water utility down the road.

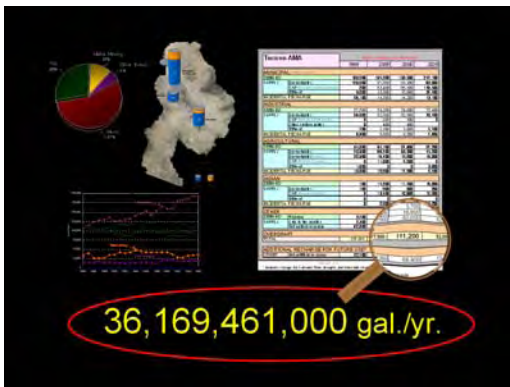
- The conservation specialist jotted down the phone number, and was excited
- The resource specialist

converted the total volume into acre-feet, then wondered what the fuss was about

- And then the utility manager calculated the cost per thousand gallons saved, and nixed the whole idea

What is clear is that each person not only had their own perspective, but they had very different expectations about the role of conservation.

Personally, I try to keep an open mind on these things, but I do tend to identify most strongly with the views of the water resource specialist, Dick.



When you are an Area Director in ADWR, this is a bit of an occupational hazard, but it is strongly influenced by the magnitude of the water resource issues that this region is wrestling with. And in particular, our ongoing overdraft.

Last year the net calculated overdraft in the Tucson AMA was 111,000 AF



That's 36,169,461,000 gallons. See, I can make numbers look big too!

Now the good news is that is actually down from 58 billion gallons in 1985, and as much as 80 billion gallons per year in the late 1970s

So in spite of the fact that the population of the AMA has literally doubled since 1980, we have made substantial progress towards safe yield, and are on track to make significant additional reductions. Moreover, at the same time we have been doing things like banking large amounts of CAP water to help protect ourselves against the impacts of shortages on the Colorado River.

I don't mean to be glib about this—we still have a long way to go to achieve safe yield, and the overall numbers mask significant spatial variation within the AMA.

But the water resources of the region are managed to a larger extent than is commonly understood.

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That management includes a system of established water rights and permits, mandatory reporting, mandatory conservation, incentives for re-use, long-range management goals, hydrologic monitoring, permitting and accounting for recharge activity, and Assured Water Supply requirements.

The Assured Water Supply requirements are often misunderstood and frequently maligned, but they deal head-on with issues of growth by requiring the demonstration of a sufficient on-site physical supply, and the Rules compel new users to contribute to Safe Yield by offsetting their use of groundwater through recharge in the AMA.

Most of the largest water providers in the region have taken that a step further, by voluntarily agreeing to designate their entire service areas under the AWS Rules. This is a more difficult and expensive option for water providers, but it shows a clear commitment to sound long-range water management.

And then there is golf.

Now, I am not a golfer. But there is something about golf and water use that causes some people to just flat-out lose it.

It doesn't matter that it is only 7% of the AMA demand, or that more than 50% is on reclaimed water, or that our regulations effectively constrain the size of new courses.

In fact, analysis of golf course size done by Laura Grignano in our office estimated that just within in the Tucson AMA, the requirements kept 10 million square feet of turf from being planted in the first place. Take that Pat Mulroy!

But for some, using water for golf is viewed as a fundamental violation of community values.

Of course this is a water management issue, but it is perhaps more fundamentally an issue of growth and community character. Water often becomes a proxy in larger social struggles, which is fine, but I'd simply note that it isn't always the most effective tool to address those larger issues.

Now at this point I'm sure I sound like an apologist for the water management approach within the AMAs. Maybe I am, because while I concede that it is complex and has lots of warts, it is still a pretty impressive thing. In fact, I challenge you to find a place that is doing a better overall job of managing its water resources.

Frankly, there aren't many, unless you focus *solely* on conservation.

The Tucson area maintains a strong conservation ethic, and Water CASA and others are working diligently to maintain our well-earned position of moral superiority. But there *are* places that are taking more aggressive steps in conservation. Why? Generally, because they have done a lousy job of *managing* their supplies.

Las Vegas and Santa Fe have gotten lots of press for their efforts, but both have run up against the limits of their physical supplies! Surely there're not stand-out examples.

Instead, the overall conservation approach taken within the AMAs has been one of consistent, incremental improvement.

ADWR's new Municipal BMP program fits that general pattern. The program requires water providers that serve more than 250 AF per year to do an assessment of their service area, and then meet mandatory levels of conservation effort, that increase with the size of the provider. The program lays out the basic framework, but then does something that, for a regulatory agency, is rather remarkable: it relies on the expertise and creativity of conservation staff *within* the utilities to develop programs tailored to their service area.

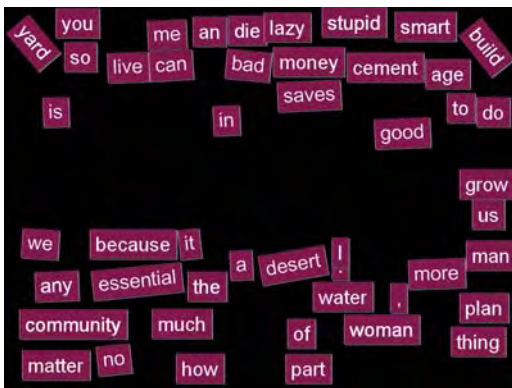
Some consider this backsliding: I disagree.

The BMP program gives us a chance to fundamentally reshape the relationship between the Department and the conservation community in a way that strengthens our collective efforts.

The level of commitment to conservation is unwavering. But my perspective is that conservation is still best viewed as a part of an overall water management approach.

I don't know, maybe I am just jealous of the attention conservation sometimes gets compared to other management strategies like augmentation, and the administration of water rights. *Boring!*

But I also wonder whether it is fair to put such a large burden on conservation. Are we giving the public unrealistic expectations about what can be accomplished solely with conservation? I don't know, but something is definitely out of whack when people are chastising *us* for not being more like Las Vegas.



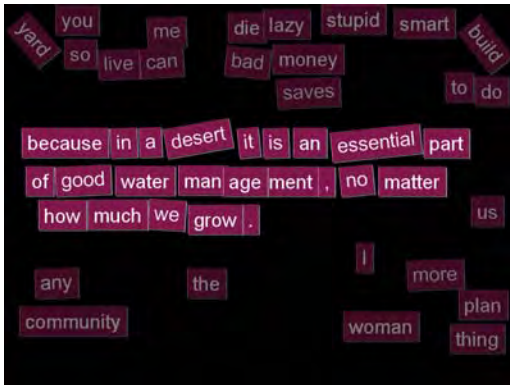
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So where does that leave this question about conservation and growth?

I think it leaves me with an answer that combines a few of the previous themes, and adds a few more too.

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Why conserve when we just keep building?



This answer definitely lacks panache, and comes uncomfortably close to bureaucratic-doublespeak. But it is the most coherent answer I can come up with, for an incredibly difficult and value-laden question.

To its enduring credit, the Tucson community rightfully expects high levels of conservation from both new and existing users.

Conservation helps keep the fragile balance between competing visions for our future, and keeps us connected our surroundings. It's the Tucson thing to do.

I am grateful to all of you who have dedicated yourselves to the cause of conservation. And personally, I can't wait to see what Water CASA is able to accomplish in the *next* ten years.

Thank you.