



# LAS CAMPANAS

March 2018

WATER & SEWER  
COOPERATIVE

## *Message from the President – Water Forecast for 2018*

It will come as no surprise to most Las Campanas residents that this winter has been unusually dry throughout New Mexico. As of the first of March, snowpack depth in the mountains is well below half of normal. Although there is still some potential for snowfall before the spring runoff begins, time is running out and the long-range forecasts are not promising. The most current forecast for runoff in the Rio Grande river, the source of Las Campanas's water, stands at about 25% of normal. The good news is that reservoir storage for our area at Abiquiu is about 80% of normal but this will be quickly depleted without any major spring precipitation events.

In the event of a water shortage, the County of Santa Fe can curtail water usage which would affect Las Campanas. As of this writing, the County has no plans to restrict water usage at this time but they are closely monitoring the situation.

The dry conditions highlight the value of our precious water resource and the importance of using water wisely. As discussed in our first

newsletter, about 2/3 of our water across Las Campanas goes to irrigation. A key element of our need to pursue a wise-water program is to carefully maintain and manage our irrigation systems and to plant and maintain plants and trees that are appropriate for this area. Leaks in irrigation lines are a major source of water loss for the Cooperative. In the early spring months, when residents begin turning on their irrigation systems, is when we see the majority of irrigation leaks. Last year we detected about 40-50 potential irrigation leaks every month for 600 homes in our community, about 8% of all homes. The Cooperative is currently conducting a pilot study of advanced metering technology that will allow each homeowner to obtain daily water usage data on their computer and/or a smartphone. This will help both the Cooperative and the homeowners monitor water consumption and provide an early warning of potential leaks. In this issue, Heather Roybal, the Cooperative's Customer Service Representative provides instructions and tips about turning on your irrigation system. In addition, Tracy Neal, a consultant to the HOA, provides guidance on the selection and maintenance of plants that are appropriate for our area.

### *Spring Start-up and Maintenance – Your Irrigation System*

The irrigation season is fast approaching. This is a friendly reminder concerning the key points in starting up your irrigation system. Since your irrigation system has been inactive during the winter, any leaks due to freezing will show up when your system is initially activated. As noted by the Board's president, around 8% of the home in Las Campanas

develop significant irrigation system leaks every spring.

To avoid leaks your system needs to be inspected by your landscape professional when it is initially activated to ensure it is functioning properly and that there are no leaks. Even a small leak can result in large amount of water loss.

Properties in Las Campanas are served by either one meter (serving both domestic and irrigation use) or two meters (one serving domestic use and the other for irrigation use). Your monthly bill shows if your property is served by one or two meters. If your property has a separate irrigation meter and does not have an isolation valve, please contact the Coop Office a minimum of two days in advance to schedule a water operator to open the valve located in the Coop's meter box. Only Coop employees can access the Coop's meter box, anyone else will be considered tampering with Coop's equipment. Once the valve is opened, water will be flowing through your irrigation system. At this point in time you should have your landscape professional present to check for leaks.

The Coop's Rules and Regulations require that both your irrigation and domestic water system have isolation valves, other than the valves in the Coop's meter box. These valves are important so you can turn on and off you water systems. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Heather Roybal at (505) 204-7835, or email her at [hroybal@lcwatersewer.coop](mailto:hroybal@lcwatersewer.coop).

## *The Right Plants and Trees – A Key Component of a Water Wise Program*

As you know springtime is the planting season and a complete wise-water program requires the selection and care of water-wise plants and trees. Tracy Neal, landscape consultant for the HOA, has prepared some planting tips and a list of plants appropriate for our high desert environment that will be both beautiful and water-wise.

### **Tracy's tips for water-wise plants:**

#### **“An Introduction to low water use plant for Las Campanas”**

Included in this newsletter is a list of plants that can be expected to grow acceptably under low to moderate water use conditions in the Las Campanas area, given proper siting and care. A list like this is somewhat of a challenge to create in an everchanging environment; it is impossible to accurately predict how the climate will change here in the coming decades and exactly how this will affect the plants we choose for our gardens. Most people who study the issue expect temperatures to increase during both the growing season and in the winter.

Though late frosts in April still seem likely, first frosts in the fall seem to come more often and take place in late October or early November,

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extending the growing season. The effect of warmer temperatures and an extended growing season creates a greater need for water over a given year. Plants that may have gotten by with very little irrigation when the climate was cooler and wetter and the season was shorter may need more frequent irrigation and substantially more water overall in order to stay healthy.

Predictions for precipitation patterns vary widely, though drier winters and less snow pack is a common expectation, which will create more stress on plants coming out of dormancy and will likely face hot dry weather in May and June. Precipitation during the growing season may more likely come in the form of infrequent downpours between long dry spells. Using techniques to maximize the beneficial effects of natural precipitation. Working with the land to direct and hold water, collecting and storing rainfall and irrigating with it later, and exploring the use of alternative sources (grey water, effluent, etc.) will all be an important factor in keeping our landscapes healthy.

This list of plants I have provided is not intended to be used to limit plant selection, but to serve as a guide for those who want to know more about appropriate choices for this area. Some trees that fit the criteria of low water use such as the Fraxinus species <Ash>, Gleditsia triacanthos cultivars <Honeylocust>, and Robinia species <Flowering Locust> have been omitted due to the expectation that pest pressures will make their use and survival questionable. For those who wish to experiment with plants not

listed here, I urge you to find out all that you can about the plants' expected hardiness, cultural requirements (especially heat and drought tolerance), and potential problems.

Before you review the the Low Water Use Plant Chart that I have prepared, I recommend that you review the supporting key (Key: Low Water Use Plant Chart). The chart will provide you with a significant amount of information which will be easier to work through if you have had a quick look at the chart's key.

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## **The Committee Members**

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