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Texas Public Policy Foundation

White: Texas water woes demand bold action

By Kathleen Hartnett White

Texas Public Policy Foundation

As the water stored in the Highland Lakes approaches historic lows, the American-Statesman has wisely underlined the gravity of the increasing water shortage in the Colorado River basin. And this admonition equally applies to every region of the state. Texas needs more water. These pages, however, propose such a grim resignation to increasing water scarcity as a condition likely to prevail, or worsen, for an indefinite future. Instead of merely lamenting declining supplies and accepting scarcity, why not boldly act to develop new water supplies?

Increased conservation is of course necessary during this drought and should be the first principle of water management in this state, where wide swings from drought to deluge are the history of rainfall over the past 75 years. Today's water shortages, however, are not intractable unless Texans refuse to surmount the status quo. As the landmark 2001 State Water Plan detailed, almost every region of Texas needs to increase available water supplies to meet future demand. With few exceptions, progress on this count has been scant for more than a decade. This acute drought has merely brought the anticipated future early.

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