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4

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The City Different is also redundant

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Posted: Saturday, August 31, 2013 10:05 pm

By Nate Downey
For The New Mexican

Redundancy is often a good practice to avoid. When writing a newspaper column, rarely is it appropriate to repeat words, phrases, concepts, and ideas over and over and over and over again. Here, redundancy is a waste of time.

Redundancy is also essential for survival. Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two

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kidneys, two lungs, this is a pattern worth recognizing. Many of our essential functions are supported by more than one component so that if we lose an ear, we can still hear, and we can continue to survive and sustain our species.

The essential function of water delivery to a home is an often-used illustration of the good kind of redundancy. Instead of being fully dependent on one well, it's great to have a cistern collecting precipitation from the roof, or a full-blown swale system at the end of a long driveway. Add thickly mulched garden beds that prevent evaporation and store water in the soil, and your essential function of water procurement is even better protected. Let's also not forget greywater reuse in the landscape and on-site blackwater treatment. These commodities are almost always seen as waste products, but they are actually great resources.

Of course, a connection to a community-wide utility is always a major plus, especially if that system has built-in redundancies. If that's not enough to make you feel comfortable about your water supply, in New Mexico you can even purchase land with associated rights to a centuries-old acequia system. Just make sure you're not down arroyo from an ancient pueblo's golf course.

A web-based news service, www.247Wallst.com, just listed Santa Fe as one of many that are running out of water, but the City Different actually has many levels of water redundancy. It has two reservoirs, several large wells, and the Buckman diversion project (which draws from two far-away watersheds). In addition, in the event of a water emergency, smaller wells scattered throughout town (tapping a wide variety of mini aquifers) could be what gets us through during times of need.

But that's not all. We also have a strong and growing cistern-system industry and a statewide greywater recycling law that has proved to be problem-free since its inception a decade ago. Our newfound excitement for curb cuts that direct stormwater to trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, and wildflowers is also a positive contribution when it comes to our most essential resource.

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4. Police search for missing man who was hunting for Forrest Fenn's treasure
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9. Woman claims she's solved Forrest Fenn riddle



On top of all of this, the city has a deeply committed water-conservation committee and professional staff working on many ways to save water. Finally, and perhaps most important, is that our population is generally very conscious about the need to respect water on many levels. If you would like to explore some of these levels more deeply, please join me and Rev. Gail Mariner at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at 107 W. Barcelona Road, on Sunday, Sept. 8 at 11 a.m. for a spiritual exploration of water as a force not only of life, but of light as well.

Nate Downey is the author of [Harvest the Rain \(2010\)](#) and [Roof-Reliant Landscaping \(2008\)](#). He started [Santa Fe Permaculture, Inc.](#), in 1992 and can be reached for landscape consultation, design, and installation via a new website, www.permadesign.com

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