

N. Nevada starting to worry about possible drought

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Joe Ricci was worrying by January. Now he knows he's in trouble.

With drought conditions worsening day by day and the Carson River dropping steadily, the Dayton-area rancher expects he may be out of water in a couple of weeks or so. He's still hoping to harvest one good crop of hay, but once irrigation is halted and his cattle and sheep eat the last of the green grass, "it's gone."

Ricci's family has ranched the land for 100 years and he's seen wet and dry years come and go. This one stands out.

"I don't remember having to worry about water this early in the year. It's already tough to get water," said Ricci, 42. "I can't remember it ever drying up this soon."

Stories like Ricci's are now being sought out by experts trying to gauge the severity of a drought impacting each of Nevada's 17 counties to some degree.

How severe this drought becomes over the summer and how this drought year stacks up in comparison to others remains to be seen. Experts, however, agree the situation appears serious.

Cities like Reno, Sparks and Carson City are expected to make it through the summer with sufficient water supplies for municipal uses, with the Truckee Meadows prepared to weather a drought lasting years in duration.

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