

Drought not slowing California development

By Adam Nagourney, New York Times

FOLSOM – Evert W. Palmer has a vision for this city famous for its state prison: 10,200 new homes spread across the rolling hills to the south, bringing in a flood of new jobs, new business and 25,000 more people.

Yes, Palmer, the city manager, is well aware that Folsom Lake, the sole source of water for this Gold Rush outpost near Sacramento, is close to historically low levels, and stands as one of the most disturbing symbols of the four-year drought that has gripped this state. And that Folsom is under orders to reduce its water consumption by 32 percent as part of mandatory statewide urban cutbacks.

But Palmer, like other officials who approved the ambitious plan to expand this city, said he was confident that there was enough water to allow Folsom's population to grow to nearly 100,000 by 2036. It would be economic folly, he said, to run things any other way.

The drought that has overrun California – forcing severe cutbacks in water for farms, homeowners and businesses – has run up against a welcome economic resurgence that is sweeping across much of the state after a particularly brutal downturn. It is forcing communities to balance a robust demand for new housing with concerns that the drought is not cyclical but rather the start of permanent, more arid conditions caused by global warming.

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