

Environmental group says limit growth to save water

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Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2015 | 3:23 p.m.

CARSON CITY — The president of an environmental group has suggested limits on growth to conserve the state's limited water resources and preserve residents' quality of life.



Abby Johnson, president of the Great Basin Water Network, told Gov. Brian Sandoval's Drought Commission that it should answer a simple question: "How many people can today's proven water supplies and conservation techniques support?"

The nonprofit network has been a leading opponent of plans to pipe millions of gallons of water a year from White Pine and Lincoln counties to Las Vegas to handle its population growth.

In her prepared remarks, Johnson said the public perception is that "water conserved will simply be used by developers to support new growth instead of protect the environment and preserve the quality of life."

Other communities have adopted water-smart growth management ordinances, she said. "It is unacceptable, unsustainable and, yes, unhealthy to set no limits on growth in the desert," she said.

Johnson said the water evaporation rates at Lake Mead and Lake Powell in Southern Nevada "are astounding."

"And how about phasing out the ornamental lakes that serve no purpose for the vast majority of residents or tourists but lose many acre feet to evaporation," she said.

The nonprofit network represents rural counties, tribes, ranchers, farmers, irrigation districts, conservationists and small businesses.