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# SALT LAKE CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

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**DATE:** April 2, 2004

**SUBJECT:** **Water Conservation Plan Update**

**AFFECTED COUNCIL DISTRICTS:** Citywide

**STAFF REPORT BY:** Gary Mumford

**ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT. AND CONTACT PERSON:** Public Utilities  
Stephanie Duer and LeRoy Hooton, Jr.

**NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:** Public hearing with “reasonable, advance public notice” and delivery of the water conservation plan to the media

**cc:** Rocky Fluhart, LeRoy Hooton, Jeff Niermeyer, Jim Lewis, Stephanie Duer, DJ Baxter

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## **KEY ELEMENTS:**

State law requires each culinary water retailer to update its water conservation master plan every five years, hold a public hearing, and file it with the Utah Division of Water Resources (73-10-32 UCA). The City Council adopted a water conservation plan update on April 6, 1999. That plan provided a recap of all previously adopted and implemented conservation policies and programs.

House Bill 153, adopted during the 2004 legislature, requires that water conservation master plans include a stated goal of water use reduction. Additionally, the new amendments encourage the inclusion of implementation plans for conservation measures. The Proposed 2004 Water Conservation Master Plan meets the requirements of HB 153, and while it is not governed by the amended bill, it also meets the intentions of the new amendments according to the Department of Public Utilities.

## **MATTERS AT ISSUE AND QUESTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION:**

In 1997, the Department of Public Utilities hired a consultant to help prepare a water master plan. That study projected average annual demand of 130,500 acre feet of water by the year 2025. The Department’s goal is to reduce that future demand to 114,000 acre feet through a combination of conservation measures and the utilization of secondary and reuse water. Achieving this goal will require that conservation measures be taken indoors as well as out of doors. Success of conservation programs depends on how well the public understands the need for conservation, perceives the fairness of policies, and has a willingness to conserve. The proposed water conservation master plan contains an introduction, background, history, current programs, conservation plan initiatives, and the next steps including annual reports. The plan also contains several appendices.

### **Conservation Plan Goal:**

The primary goal is to reduce overall water consumption by 13% by the year 2025, for a volume of 16,400 acre feet of water. To achieve the 13% overall reduction, the Department has set a goal to reduce indoor water consumption by an additional 5% and to reduce outdoor water use by an additional 20%.

### **Current and Ongoing Programs:**

The proposed water conservation plan highlights several ongoing programs including the following:

1. Loss preventions – Maintain distribution lines to reduce loss due to leakage and breakage.
2. Indoor leak detection – Monitor winter usage levels and notify customers when usage is in excess of 20% of average winter usage providing for timely repair of indoor plumbing fixtures.
3. Billing and brochures – Bill customers monthly, providing information on the volume of water used in each of three billing tiers and the price per unit per tier. Provide a comparison of water used over the previous 12 months. Include conservation tips in the message area of the bill. Regularly insert brochures providing more detailed water conservation information.
4. Sewer charges – Continue to base sewer rates on metered winter water usage, which resulted in a 12.5% reduction in indoor water use following implementation in 1982.
5. Rate structure – Adopted a conservation rate structure that charges an increasing cost for water through three blocks of water consumption. The impact of the new rate structure will be assessed after it has been in place for an entire irrigation season.
6. Irrigation audit program – Continue to participate in the USU Extension Service water audit program. The Department pays an annual cost and customers may request free irrigation audits and lawn watering scheduling advice. The audit includes an inspection of sprinkler heads with a bullet list of “fix-its.” Over a thousand irrigation audits have been conducted for Salt Lake City water customers.
7. Landscape – Encourage water conservation through the use of low-water plants and by not requiring turf in landscapes. The Department created a water-wise plant list for contractors, landscapers and homeowners.

### **Program Initiatives:**

The Department identified 27 potential program initiatives to be implemented over the next five years. Those initiatives are divided into three categories: programs directed at the Department; programs directed at the City; and programs directed at residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional customers. The initiatives are found on pages 16 and 17 of the Plan. Examples of initiatives include improve the usefulness of information on the water bills, develop a schedule for replacement of outdated City-owned irrigation systems, and place conservation materials in garden centers and plumbing supply stores.

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**Monitoring and Evaluation:**

The Department proposes to establish benchmarks within each customer category and for the community as a whole (one of the above program initiatives). Periodically the Department will analyze the success, acceptance, cost, and other relevant characteristics of each program and measure through the use of surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and other methods. A water conservation annual report of progress will be prepared each year.

*The Council may wish to ask about the progress for implementing water reuse and efforts for utilizing secondary water uses.*

*The Council may wish to ask about the schedule that the Department will be proposing for replacing outdated irrigation systems and whether water savings could be sufficient to justify bonding for some of the improvements.*

**OPTIONS:**

The Department is requesting that the Council hold a public hearing and consider adopting the water conservation plan in April since it has been five years since the original plan was filed with the State Division of Water Resources.

1. Schedule a public hearing for April 20<sup>th</sup>.
2. Schedule a public hearing for May 4<sup>th</sup> or some other future date to give more time for the public or Council to consider the plan. The Department could inform the Division of Water Resources that the plan has been completed and that it will be submitted following the public hearing and adoption.
3. Request additions or changes to the Water Conservation Plan.
4. Request additional information or schedule another work session to discuss water conservation or utilization of secondary and reuse water.

**CHRONOLOGY:**

- April 6, 1999 – The Council held a public hearing and adopted a water conservation plan.
  - March 25, 2004 – The Public Utilities Advisory Committee adopted the updated Water Conservation Plan.
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