



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

DATE ISSUED: Dec. 1, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-192

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee  
Agenda of Dec. 6, 2006

SUBJECT: Water Conservation Update

REQUESTED ACTION:

This report updates Water Conservation activities resulting in significant water savings to both the Water Department and Water Department customers. No action is required by the Committee or Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the status report.

SUMMARY:

**Background**

San Diego relies mostly upon imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River. Our pleasant Mediterranean climate attracts large numbers of potential residents, businesses, and tourists every year. It is important that the City of San Diego practice careful water resource planning to ensure an adequate water supply to sustain its economy and lifestyle.

The Water Department is committed to improving water supply reliability and water conservation is a critical component of the City's water resources management efforts, as every gallon saved reduces the need to purchase, store, treat and deliver imported water. As part of its commitment to water conservation, the Water Department has prepared the attached report outlining key conservation programs and initiatives.

## Discussion

The City's Water Conservation Program has been and continues to be effective in promoting permanent water savings. Established by the City Council in 1985, the Water Conservation Program now accounts for over 30,000 acre-feet (AF) of potable water savings each year. This is enough water to fill Lake Miramar over four times.

The City's water conservation program includes such initiatives as the Commercial Landscape Survey Program, the Residential Interior/Exterior Survey Program, the Ultra Low Flow Toilet and High-Efficiency Clothes Washer incentive programs, a web based Landscape Watering Calculator, and a variety of public outreach and education efforts. Through these efforts, not only is the City achieving its goal of improving water supply reliability, but it is also demonstrating its ongoing commitment to implement proven water conservation measures.

With the success of the indoor conservation program over the last 15 years, the City has geared up to promote programs and activities that address water conservation for outdoor water use. During the summer, residents can use up to 75% of their water for outdoor uses such as irrigation. Several programs have been successful in assisting our customers to use water efficiently and to reduce irrigation water waste:

1. Residential Water Use Survey – Single family residents benefit from an on-site survey that assesses irrigation systems, looks for leaks, and establishes customized irrigation schedules based on the plant's water needs.
2. Commercial Landscape Survey – A higher level survey that uses GIS and satellite maps to measure irrigated areas, establish water budgets and irrigation schedules, and offer recommendations for irrigation systems and designs to improve watering efficiency. This program is popular with HOAs, golf courses, City parks, and commercial customers.
3. Landscape Watering Calculator – An easy-to-use web tool for anyone to access and create irrigations schedules year-round that minimize water waste. The tool can be accessed at <http://apps.sandiego.gov/landcalc/start.do> .
4. Weather Based Irrigation Controller and Landscape Incentives – Grants have been made available for our customers to receive these smart controllers and other irrigation fixtures for free or at substantial discounts through programs run regionally by the MWD and CWA.
5. Water Conservation Garden – Interest in the garden has picked up through various activities such as: garden concerts, festivals and “paint-outs” as described in the attached report. Most visitors are impressed with the beauty and color of “water efficient” gardens, dispelling the myth that water conservation gardens are mostly rocks and cacti.
6. California Friendly Plants – Working with water agencies like the City of San Diego Water Department, MWD developed the California Friendly Campaign to promote water-efficient plants, appliances and homes. With the goal of having the same

branding awareness as EPA's "Energy Star," California Friendly works with nurseries, builders, appliance manufacturers, landscapers and other stakeholders to increase awareness and availability of California Friendly products throughout Southern California

On May 25, 2006, the CWA Board voted to increase its FY2007 water conservation budget from \$500,000 to \$1.8 million to fund programs that support the initiatives above and those mentioned in the attached report. This infusion of "new investment" in conservation will include funding for increase public education and ad campaigns, so conservation will once again be a priority for San Diego residents, helping promote our programs and realizing water savings.

### **Conclusion**

The attached report provides an update on the City's on-going water conservation efforts. It outlines the City's efforts to meet recognized Best Management Practices (BMPs), provides the details of the City's various water conservation programs, and documents the Water Department's effort to ensure the responsible use of water by all its customers. It also serves as the Department's plan to achieve water savings of 32,000 acre feet by 2010.

### FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The Water Conservation Program actively pursues best management practices that implement water conservation at a cost less than the purchase price of raw water.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:

The Water Conservation Program has appeared before the City Council on numerous occasions. Perhaps the most significant date is on September 23, 1991, when the San Diego City Council joined the California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC) by signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Urban Water Conservation in California. The MOU is a collaborative effort by members of the CUWCC which gives strength and commitment to water rights decisions that affect California's water allocations and commits the City to implementing BMPs as defined in the MOU.

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS:

Central to the overall water conservation goal is community participation and public outreach efforts. Public education promotes new conservation efforts as well as the existing foundation of conservation programs. The outreach campaign is structured to reach schoolchildren as well as adults. Components of the campaign include: an annual children's poster contest; article placements in community newspapers; participation in community fairs and events; the water

conservation exhibit at the Reuben H. Fleet Space Theatre in Balboa Park, and; the Water Conservation Garden on the campus of Cuyamaca College. Complete details of the Water Conservation Program's community participation and outreach efforts are detailed in the attached report.

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R. F. Haas  
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CDR/cdr

- Attachment
1. [Water Conservation Update](#)
  2. [Water Conservation Implementation Plan](#)