

The Ahwahnee Water Principles

■ Preamble

Cities and counties are facing major challenges with water contamination, stormwater runoff, flood damage liability, and concerns about whether there will be enough reliable water for current residents as well as for new development.

These issues impact city and county budgets and taxpayers. Fortunately there are a number of stewardship actions that cities and counties can take that reduce costs and improve the reliability and quality of our water resources.

The Water Principles below complement the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities that were developed in 1991. Many cities and counties are already using them to improve the vitality and prosperity of their communities.

■ Community Principles

1. Community design should be compact, mixed use, walkable and transit-oriented so that automobile-generated urban runoff pollutants are minimized and the open lands that absorb water are preserved to the maximum extent possible.

[See the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities]

2. Natural resources such as wetlands, flood plains, recharge zones, riparian areas, open space, and native habitats should be identified, preserved and restored as valued assets for flood protection, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, habitat, and overall long-term water resources sustainability.

3. Water holding areas such as creek beds, recessed athletic fields, ponds, cisterns, and other features that serve to recharge groundwater, reduce runoff, improve water quality and decrease flooding should be incorporated into the urban landscape.

4. All aspects of landscaping from the selection of plants to soil preparation and the installation of irrigation systems should be designed to reduce water demand, retain runoff, decrease flooding, and recharge groundwater.

5. Permeable surfaces should be used for hardscape. Impervious surfaces such as driveways, streets, and parking lots should be minimized so that land is available to absorb stormwater, reduce polluted urban runoff, recharge groundwater and reduce flooding.

6. Dual plumbing that allows gray water from showers, sinks and washers to be reused for landscape irrigation should be included in the infrastructure of new development.

7. Community design should maximize the use of recycled water for appropriate applications including outdoor irrigation, toilet flushing, and commercial and industrial processes. Purple pipe should be installed in all new construction and remodeled buildings in anticipation of the future availability of recycled water.

8. Urban water conservation technologies such as low-flow toilets, efficient clothes washers, and more efficient water-using industrial equipment should be incorporated

in all new construction and retrofitted in remodeled buildings.

9. Ground water treatment and brackish water desalination should be pursued when necessary to maximize locally available, drought-proof water supplies.

■ Implementation Principles

1. Water supply agencies should be consulted early in the land use decision-making process regarding technology, demographics and growth projections.

2. City and county officials, the watershed council, LAFCO, special districts and other stakeholders sharing watersheds should collaborate to take advantage of the benefits and synergies of water resource planning at a watershed level.

3. The best, multi-benefit and integrated strategies and projects should be identified and implemented before less integrated proposals, unless urgency demands otherwise.

4. From start to finish, projects and programs should involve the public, build relationships, and increase the sharing of and access to information. The participatory process should focus on ensuring that all residents have access to clean, reliable and affordable water for drinking and recreation.

5. Plans, programs, projects and policies should be monitored and evaluated to determine if the expected results are achieved and to improve future practices.

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1303 J Street, Suite 600
Sacramento, CA 95814-3966
(916) 448-1198 ■ fax (916) 448-8246

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Water Management Resources for Local Government

The Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource-Efficient Land Use

This set of nine community principles and five implementation measures was put together by leading water experts from the national, state and local levels. They address concerns about stormwater runoff, flood damage liability and the reliability of local water supplies by offering cost-saving, stewardship actions that cities and counties can implement. *see back* >

Illustrated fact sheets for California local elected officials

These five fact sheets address the critical links between local land use policy and the sustainability of local water supplies and help local governments implement the Ahwahnee Water Principles.

NOW AVAILABLE

In the fact sheets:

- Economic and environmental facts
- Local government programs and policies
- General plan language
- Brief case studies
- Multiple illustrations

Download all five –
water.lgc.org



1 Land Use and Watersheds

This fact sheet describes the critical importance of preserving watersheds. It then explains several venues open to local elected officials for working on a regional level to permanently preserve the availability of local water supplies by protecting the watershed.

2 Livable Communities and Water

The compact, mixed-use, walkable development that is encouraged by the Livable Communities/Smart Growth movement turns out to be a perfect fit when it comes to planning for future water supplies. This fact sheet explains for elected officials the surprising links between livable communities and water – and the many benefits of acting on them.



3 Water Conservation

Water conservation is a practical strategy for serving the needs of a growing state. This fact sheet outlines conservation as a source of new water supplies, the economic and environmental advantages of conserving water, and the multiple opportunities available for conserving water.

4 Water Recycling and Reuse

Our precious water supplies can be safely used more than once. This fact sheet addresses California laws that encourage or require the use of recycled water, recycling and reuse techniques, and case studies of communities that are aggressively pursuing these options.



5 Urban Stormwater Management

Federal requirements now require the clean-up of urban runoff before it reaches receiving waters. This fact sheet provides some least-cost methods for meeting these requirements – by using nature's systems to handle drainage water.