

# Top Water Efficiency Policies for Communities



**Water efficiency** is our *best* source of *affordable* water and must be the backbone of **water supply** planning.

## Stop Leaks

Aging, broken pipes lose large quantities of precious clean water through leaks.

- Reduce leaks to as close to zero as possible.
- Conduct self audits to identify system leaks and eliminate unmetered uses.

The average loss for most big cities is about 15%- wasting millions of gallons per day!

## Price Water Right

Water must be priced to cover costs and to encourage efficiency. Utilities should adopt a two part fee system which establishes:

- A flat service fee that covers all utility fixed costs, such as pipe maintenance and pump station operations.
- A variable fee for the volume of water consumed, charging significantly *higher rates* as water consumption increases to discourage water waste, and *lower rates* for conserving households and low-fixed income customers.
- Higher fees associated with water waste should fund conservation incentive programs and alleviate the increased cost to lower and fixed income customers.

Conservation pricing on average can yield 15% reduction in water consumption for only a fraction of a penny per gallon increase in price.

## Meter ALL Water Users

Most apartments, condos, and commercial buildings include a flat rate for water in the rent or monthly fees cutting out any market signals to encourage water efficiency.

- Water meters must be installed on all new homes, multi-family apartment buildings, and businesses.
- Incentives should be provided to retrofit existing multi-family and commercial buildings.

## Retrofit All Buildings

Outdated appliances and fixtures waste a lot of water. Replacing antiquated toilets with high efficiency ones can save between 63% and 81% of the water their toilets currently use. Toilets alone use 27% of household water.

- Invest in voluntary incentive programs that provide rebates, swap-outs, or direct installations to retrofit wasteful water fixtures and appliances.
- Mandate retrofitting of antiquated fixtures and appliances upon resale of homes or establishment of a new water account.
- Provide free audits for all customer sectors to assess where the most cost-effective and water efficient savings can be secured.



If all U.S. households installed water-efficient fixtures and appliances, the country would save more than 3 trillion gallons of water and \$18 billion dollars per year.

To view the report go to: [www.AmericanRivers.org/waterefficiencyreport](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/waterefficiencyreport)

## Landscape to Minimize Water Waste

U.S. homes consume on average 30% of their Evian quality drinking water outdoors watering lawns, plants and trees.

- Require dedicated irrigation meters for large landscapes (such as office parks, hospitals, school campuses) and create a significantly higher water rate for irrigation water.
- Require moisture or rain sensors for all irrigation systems.
- Provide free irrigation system audits.
- Promote different landscape models to reduce water-intensive plantings.
- Provide education materials to developers and landscapers on drought-tolerant landscaping.

Tampa Bay, Florida's smart sprinkling education and landscape incentives programs have secured a 25% reduction in outdoor water use.

## Increase Public Understanding

Most people in the U.S. take for granted that water will come out of the tap when they turn it on.

- Create an outreach campaign about smart, simple, cost-effective water efficiency.
- Demystify the water bill by billing in gallon increments on a monthly basis and sharing historical data to compare use from month to month and year to year.
- Designate a staff member to coordinate water efficiency, conservation and reuse programs.

## Build Smart for the Future

In the U.S., 50% of the homes that will exist in 2030 have not yet been built. With climate change and growing populations in mind the current trends of water waste in new developments need to be reversed to stress cost saving water efficiency.

- Enact policies that promote the use of alternative sources of water, such as gray water and rainwater, for uses that do not require drinking water quality water.
- Design homes and neighborhoods to capture and reuse stormwater on site.
- Require "dual plumbing" for new homes and businesses.
- Regularly update building codes and ordinances to support or require the use of the most water efficiency technologies.



## Return Water to the River

Lack of water compromises the health of a river as well as its ability to sustain its human and natural communities.

- Water efficiency frees up water, some of which should be returned to the river of origin.
- State level policy should be adopted that requires river and community "water budgets" be developed for every river, estuary, and aquifer in the state. Water budgets provide 1) an assessment of the ecologically sustainable flow for a healthy river; 2) a determination of how much water can be sustainably 'harvested' from the river; and 3) an assessment of community priorities that establishes how our shared water should be used.

## Involve Water Users in Decisions

Opportunities for significant water savings can be overlooked without the stakeholders at the table. Involving the water users in these ways encourages higher rates of efficiency.

- Create a standing advisory board, with representatives from all sectors including industrial, commercial, residential, to provide ideas, guidance and assistance with water supply policy and programs.
- Host town hall meetings about policy and rate changes to engage questions and develop support for rate changes, outdoor water regulations, and efficiency programs.

**For more information, please contact  
Peter Raabe, Southeast Director for Government Relations  
919-286-2469 or [praabe@americanrivers.org](mailto:praabe@americanrivers.org)**