



City of Rio Rancho New Mexico

Water Resources Management Plan

Implementation Plan Update

September 10, 2014



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City of Rio Rancho

Water Resources Management Plan Implementation Plan Update

1. Introduction

The City of Rio Rancho Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) Final Report and Policy Recommendations document was completed in August 2004 (Wilson, 2004). The WRMP outlined the City's water resources and practices up to that date, made recommendations regarding water resources management strategies, and provided a schedule for their implementation. The WRMP also called for regular review, re-evaluation, and updates at least every five years.

Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Inc. (DBS&A) worked with the City to review the progress of the 39 implementation policies identified in the original WRMP, reprioritize these policies, and where appropriate, identify new implementation policies for the next five-year planning period (fiscal years 2015 through 2019). The results of those efforts are detailed in this updated implementation plan for the City's WRMP.

When possible, the City follows conservation guidelines listed in the area's regional plan that has been accepted by the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission.

2. Update Process and Public Involvement

Six meetings were held to obtain input on which policies to include in the WRMP implementation plan update, including five meetings with City staff and utility commissioners and one public meeting:

- March 25, 2013: The first City of Rio Rancho WRMP implementation plan update meeting was held with four City Public Works Department staff, two utility commissioners, and DBS&A in attendance.

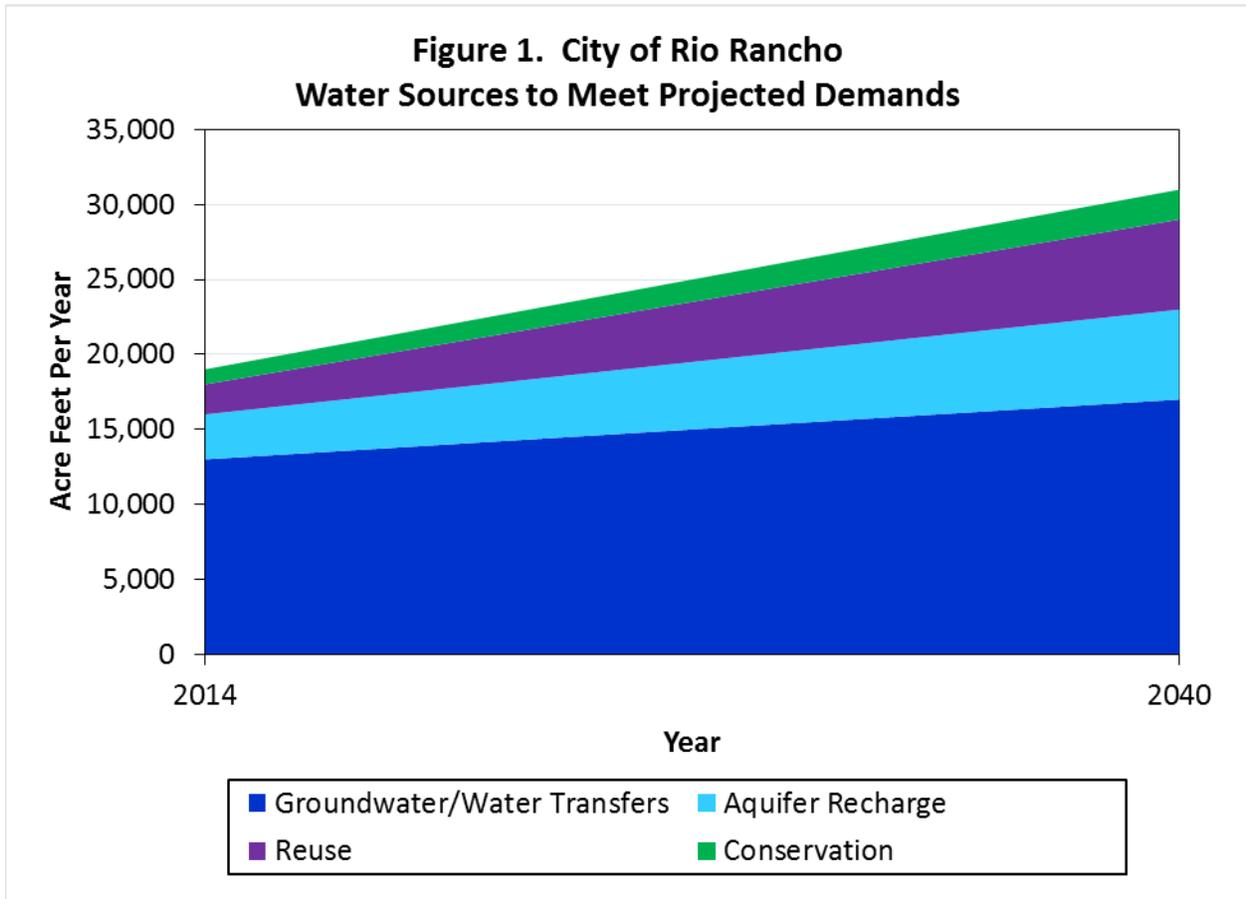
- June 6, 2013: A meeting was held with nine City staff, one utility commissioner, and DBS&A in attendance. The City staff were from the Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Development Services Departments.
- July 19, 2013: A meeting was held with eight City staff, two utility commissioners, and DBS&A in attendance. The City staff were from the Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Development Services, and Code Enforcement Departments.
- September 18, 2013: A meeting was held with four City Public Works Department staff and DBS&A in attendance.
- September 26, 2013: A meeting was held with three City Public Works Department staff, three utility commissioners, and DBS&A in attendance.
- December 14, 2013: A public meeting was held with ten private citizens, three City Public Works Department staff, three utility commissioners, one City Councilor, Phyllis Baker from Cooney Watson & Associates, Todd Kirkpatrick from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Amy Ewing and Bob Marley from DBS&A in attendance.

At the meetings, the participants discussed which of the 2004 implementation policies have been completed and which are ongoing priorities, identified new policies to be included in the WRMP implementation plan update, and provided feedback regarding prioritization of the updated list of implementation policies. Summaries of the meeting discussions are included in Appendix A. The recommendations arising from these meetings regarding the policies to be included in the WRMP implementation plan are detailed in Sections 3 and 4.

3. 2004 Implementation Policy Recommendations and Discussion

The City of Rio Rancho is implementing a number of water resource management policies to ensure that there is a sustainable water supply for the City's future. The majority of the City's demand is supplied by groundwater, although the aquifer storage and recovery, reuse, and conservation programs are also key to meeting demands both now and in the future. Figure 1

illustrates the City's current breakdown of demand by water source, as well as a projection of the increase in demand that is expected to occur by 2040 and the growth in supply to come from each of these sources.



The following sections list the 39 implementation policies identified in the original WRMP and provide an update on their progress and applicability for the next five-year planning period. The implementation policies proposed for inclusion in the WRMP implementation plan update are listed in Table 1, along with their respective priorities, specific actions, and responsible parties.

3.1 Reduce per capita water usage from 181 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) to 150 gpcd (Policy #VII.1.a)

This goal was achieved for the first time in 2005, when the City’s per capita use was 147.58 gallons per day. Per capita usage was 141.77 gallons per day in 2011, and 159.34 gallons per day in 2012 (this latter value reflected lower City irrigation demand, relatively unchanged single family residential per capita use, and increased commercial irrigation and industrial demand). The per capita usage for 2013 was 136.21 gallons per day (Figure 2). A new goal of 135 gpcd has been set with a target date of 2017, and this goal is included as implementation policy C.1 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period. It was suggested during the implementation plan update process that per capita water use be evaluated by category, since annual water demand varies by sector. Per capita demand for the single family residential sector is shown on Figure 3. Per capita usage is tracked annually using an Excel spreadsheet designed by the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer.

Figure 2. City of Rio Rancho Per Capita Water Use, 2000-2013

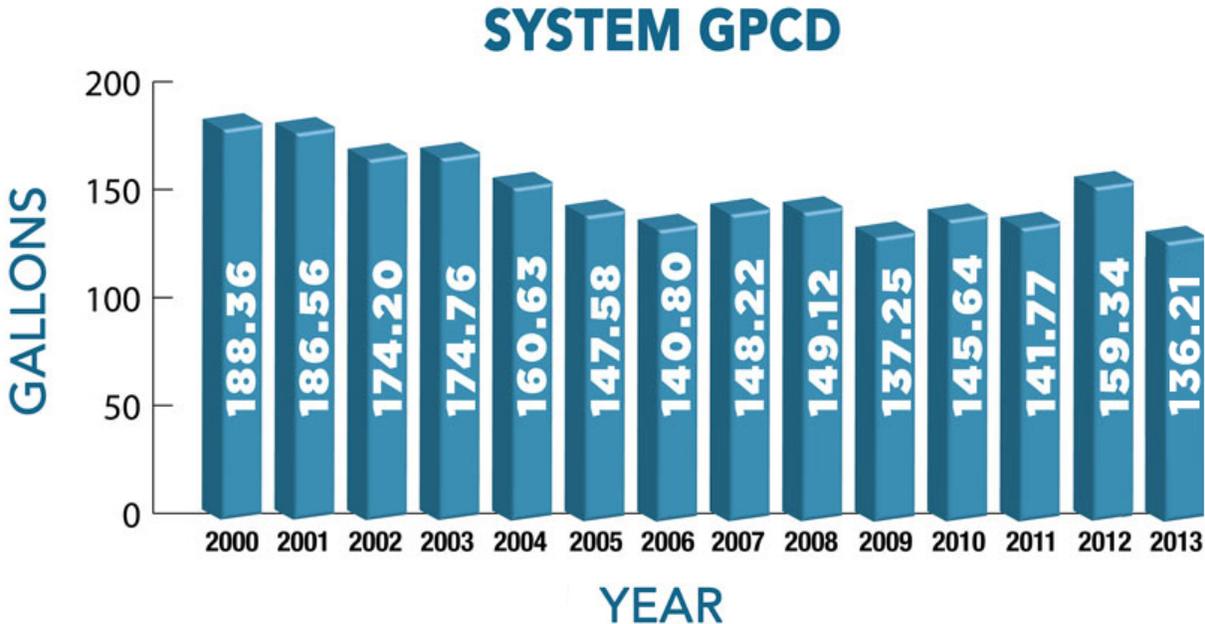
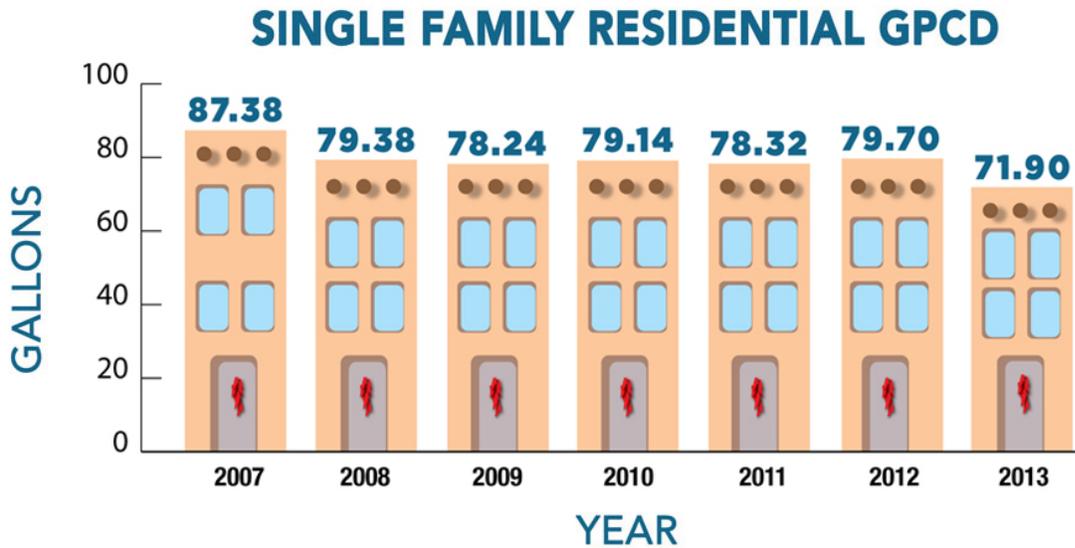


Figure 3. City of Rio Rancho Single Family Residential Per Capita Water Use, 2007-2013



3.2 Evaluate the causes of unaccounted water (UAW), and reduce UAW from 16 percent to less than 10 percent of total water pumped (Policy #VII.1.b)

Since the implementation plan summary was published in 2004, the industry-wide terminology regarding “unaccounted water” has been changed to “non-revenue water”. The City tracks its non-revenue water on an annual basis, using a water accounting technique based on the International Water Association/American Water Works Association (IWA/AWWA) water audit guidelines.

The City’s non-revenue water is not yet under 10 percent. Non-revenue water accounted for 12.8 percent of the total volume of water that was pumped in 2011, 16.2 percent in 2012, and 17.6 percent in 2013. The City’s non-revenue water is thought to stem primarily from leaks, line breaks, fire department training, and construction (Wrage, 2013). This policy has been revised to reflect the terminology change to non-revenue water and is included as implementation policy C.2 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.3 Pass a comprehensive Water Conservation Ordinance, including effective enforcement mechanisms (Policy #VII.1.c)

In June 2003, Rio Rancho passed a comprehensive water conservation ordinance consisting of three main components: water waste and fugitive water, time-of-day watering restrictions, and water by request. The ordinance is enforced using fees that are applied to the violator's water account. Fee assessments range from \$25 to \$500 for meter sizes less than 2 inches and \$50 to \$500 for meter sizes greater than or equal to 2 inches.

The City will review and revise the water conservation ordinance in the future as necessary; however, the implementation of this policy is complete and it is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.4 Initiate a program to provide home and business water audits to help achieve water conservation goals (Policy #VII.1.d)

The City established a water audit program in July 2003 and offers water audits to residential and commercial customers. Audits are conducted at the customer's request. A total of 3,335 audits have been requested since the program's start through fiscal year 2013. Of these audits 558 were requested during fiscal year 2013, 945 during fiscal year 2012, and 545 during fiscal year 2011.

Because of its success in educating the public and reducing per capita demand, the City has budgeted for continuing to operate the program, and it is included as implementation policy E.1 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period. In the updated plan the policy has been expanded to include a component calling for providing educational materials on the potential monetary savings that can result from conserving water.

3.5 Form a strong, adequately staffed water conservation program with the resources necessary to promote and implement water conservation initiatives (Policy #VII.1.e)

The City's water conservation program was established in 1998 and is currently supported by 1.5 full time staff (one of the conservation staff is also responsible for other programs). The conservation program has grown since the last WRMP implementation summary was completed in 2004, when the program only included one position (Wrage, 2013); however, the program does not have the resources necessary to fully implement the water conservation initiatives that have been identified, and funding is not currently available for program expansion.

The potential for using university work-study employees to help with the implementation of water conservation policies is being explored, and the City's first work-study employee was hired during the Fall 2013 semester, working 12 to 16 hours per week in the Water Conservation Office (Wrage, 2013). The work-study positions are funded primarily by the University of New Mexico, with a portion of the costs being paid for by the City of Rio Rancho's Human Resources Department (Wrage, 2013). This policy has been revised to request additional staff and resources for the water conservation program going forward and is included as implementation policy E.2 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.6 Fund the design and placement of graphical displays in City facilities and on billboards to show water use, goals for water savings, and water conservation initiatives (Policy #VII.1.f)

The City has placed water conservation advertisements addressing its rebate programs on billboards and routinely runs the information in newspaper advertisements as well. No graphical displays are present in City facilities yet, and the advertising conducted to date does not show water use or goals. This policy is being included as implementation policy E.3 in the implementation plan going forward; the City has the funding necessary to complete this implementation policy and will add information to the advertisement campaign.

3.7 Provide space and construction of special displays at City facilities demonstrating new equipment and water conserving hardware for homes and businesses (Policy #VII.1.g)

This implementation policy has not been completed and is not a City priority at this time. Accordingly, it is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.8 Set the example for water conservation, using City sites as demonstration projects for attractive xeriscaping (Policy #VII.1.h)

The City has a water wise demonstration garden at the Esther Bone Memorial Library, which was built in 2000. The garden is an effective example of attractive xeriscaping, and the project is periodically written about in City newsletters and on the City website. The City Parks and Facilities Division is removing turf in some areas of the City parks and replacing it with xeriscaping, and the water bills for all City facilities are heavily scrutinized. With the completion of the water wise demonstration garden by the library and the ongoing turf removal projects, this implementation policy is considered to have been completed and is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.9 Encourage and educate residents about on-site rainwater harvesting, use, and sophisticated irrigation controls (Policy #VII.1.i)

This policy has not been implemented, although the City does provide the public with brochures that discuss rainwater harvesting. The Water Conservation Office plans to post additional information to the website regarding on-site rainwater harvesting and to put together a training course regarding sophisticated irrigation controls for presentation to the parks department, schools, irrigation businesses, and the public. This policy is included as implementation policy E.4 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period and has been expanded to also include graywater harvesting and use, soil amendment use, and partnering with the Sandoval County Extension Office. The implementation of this policy will begin with the water conservation staff re-vamping the educational materials that are available on the website.

3.10 Expand the current rebate program to include additional incentives for investing in water conservation practices in balance with the value of water savings (Policy #VII.1.j)

This policy has been implemented, and although it was suspended in December 2008 due to limited budget, the rebate program was reinstated in July 2012 with a budget of \$90,000 per year. The current rebate programs are for efficient clothes washers and toilets. To qualify for a rebate, the City requires replacement toilets to have a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) WaterSense label, with a flush volume of 1.28 gallons per flush or lower. To qualify for a clothes washer rebate, the replacement must be classified as a Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE) Tier 3 appliance, indicating that the selected model is 30 percent more efficient than federal standards (Wrage, 2013). This policy is included as implementation policy C.3 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period, and has been expanded to include a rebate program for attending a landscape irrigation efficiency course.

3.11 Take the lead in consulting with and establishing a partnership with Rio Rancho Public Schools to implement a robust water resources educational curriculum, instituting a formal program at two grade levels based upon available curriculums (Policy #VII.2.a)

This policy is being implemented, although its implementation has been limited by the water conservation staff resources that are available. The City has implemented a university student intern program, where one student is employed for 12 to 16 hours per week in the Water Conservation Office. One of the primary duties of the interns is to support education and outreach efforts. The City recently employed their second student intern, who worked through the Spring 2014 semester. Additional students will be hired in the future, as possible (Wrage, 2014).

The Water Conservation Office's educational curriculum currently consists of a 4th grade water festival that is put on by the Water Conservation Office each year; however, the curriculum has not yet been expanded to two grade levels. The Water Conservation Office would like to expand the implementation of this policy; however, additional water conservation staff will be

necessary. This policy is included as implementation policy E.5 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.12 *Develop a “packaged” educational/informational program for senior, civic, and business groups that address water issues (Policy #VII.2.b)*

This policy has not yet been implemented, again due to a lack of water conservation staff resources. In 2003, the City produced an informational video discussing the water conservation program; however, this needs to be updated to make it more current and interesting (Wrage, 2013). This policy, included as implementation policy E.6 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period, has been revised to indicate that any programs that are developed will be cycled (i.e., periodically re-disseminated, for instance on a quarterly basis).

3.13 *Develop and distribute educational materials about septic tank maintenance and its relationship to aquifer protection (Policy #VII.2.c)*

This policy has not been implemented, but is seen as a priority. The City has been working with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) on source water protection issues and has plans to develop and distribute these educational materials. This policy is included as implementation policy P.4 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.14 *Develop and distribute educational materials on water efficient evaporative coolers, cooler maintenance, and how it relates to water usage (Policy #VII.2.d)*

This policy has been implemented and therefore removed from the ongoing implementation plan. The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (OSE) provides free educational materials on water-efficient evaporative coolers and maintenance. These materials are included in newsletters and distributed at City Hall and in City-sponsored booths any time staff are invited to participate in conferences and other events (e.g., the annual Xeriscape Expo).

3.15 *Review and improve the water billing component that compares customer class average use and prior year use to individual use, as a method of educating consumers about individual water conservation (Policy #VII.2.e)*

The City water bills have been including the customer's demand for the current and previous years by month for the last three years, but do not provide a comparison with the average use by customer class. The Water Conservation Office plans to post the customer average for the winter quarter on the website, updating it each year, to be used in comparing indoor annual water use. Further efforts to provide comparison information are not a priority, and this implementation policy is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.16 *Develop Master Plans identifying the infrastructure requirements and locations for the extension of water, wastewater, and reclaimed water supply throughout the incorporated City limits (Policy #VII.3.a)*

Master planning has been completed for the City's full build-out for water (Bohannon Huston, Inc.), wastewater (Wilson), and reuse (DBS&A). This implementation policy is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.17 *Re-evaluate the water rate structure to include a cost for the purchase of water rights, protection of groundwater supplies, and expenses anticipated for future water rights acquisitions and transfers (Policy #VII.3.b)*

The City's water rate structure was recently evaluated by a rate consultant who concluded that the existing rates were inadequate to meet operating expenses, maintain water and wastewater infrastructure, sustain cash reserves, and maintain a strong bond credit rating. Consequently, rates were increased by 8.8 percent on February 1, 2013 and are being further increased by 8.8 percent on July 1 of each year for 2013 through 2016. Given these actions this implementation policy has been completed and is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.18 *Aggressively pursue the purchase of water rights, including staff and resources for seeking, negotiating, and acquiring those rights (Policy #VII.3.c)*

This policy is being addressed, but is an ongoing priority and is therefore included, as implementation policy I.1, in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period. Specific water sources to assess (Table 1) include transbasin transfers, wholesale water purchase from the local water providers and purchase of water rights from the industrial customer and other owners of water rights.

3.19 *Institute a rate structure that charges more for high consumption within each customer class (Policy #VII.3.d)*

This policy has been implemented and is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period. The City's water rates rise with higher consumption and were recently re-evaluated, leading to multiple rate increases between 2013 and 2016.

3.20 *Expediently implement the Water Reuse Strategy including large- and small-scale water reuse programs, reuse for irrigation and other non-potable uses, and development of reuse distribution and storage facilities (Policy #VII.3.e)*

The implementation of this policy is in progress—including the use of recycled water for fire department training, dust control, street sweeping, and construction (with an expansion of the number of purple fire hydrants that are located in the City)—and it is seen as a priority going forward. This policy, included as implementation policy R.1 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period, has been expanded to include direct injection of reuse water for aquifer storage and recovery.

3.21 *Pursue advanced treatment technologies for water reuse applications and aquifer re-injection programs (Policy #VII.3.f)*

This implementation policy has been addressed and is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.22 To the extent allowed by state law, the City will actively manage domestic wells within City limits (Policy #VII.3.g)

The City passed an ordinance requiring City permits for drilling domestic wells within City limits. Existing wells are grandfathered in; that is, no City permit is required for existing wells as long as the well is not deepened or re-drilled. This policy is included as implementation policy P.1 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period; ongoing efforts include training program management staff and considering expansion of the ordinance.

3.23 Take action to limit and reduce the number of well penetrations into the aquifer by extending water utilities into areas not currently served by the City water system; direct the Utilities Commission to identify parameters to extend water utilities into areas not served by the City and make recommendations to the Governing Body. Encourage property owners to connect to the City system when City utilities become available to their property; encourage property owners to properly plug and seal their domestic wells for groundwater protection when no longer used (Policy #VII.3.h)

The City's domestic well permit ordinance addresses this implementation policy, and it is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.24 Take action to limit and reduce the potential for groundwater contamination from septic systems by extending wastewater utilities into areas not currently served by the City sewer system; encourage property owners to connect to the City system when City sewer becomes available; and decommission any on-site facilities (Policy #VII.3.i)

The City wants to encourage water customers to tie onto the sewer system, maximizing the number of return flow credits that can be claimed. As an ongoing priority, this policy is included as implementation policy P.3 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period, with an action added to educate City residents about the benefits of hooking others into the wastewater utility.

3.25 *Work with the State Engineer’s Office and lobby the State Legislature to expand the local authority to permit and regulate domestic wells (Policy #VII.4.a)*

This implementation policy has been completed, with the City obtaining local authority to permit and regulate domestic wells, as well as the creation of the domestic well permit program. Consequently, it is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.26 *Support the State’s effort to change State law for new domestic well allocation from 3 acre-feet to 1.5 acre-feet per year with provisions to require meters and water use reporting, for data purposes, on new domestic wells (Policy #VII.4.b)*

This implementation policy has been completed, with the State having lowered the domestic well allocation from 3 acre-feet per year (ac-ft/yr) to 1 ac-ft/yr. Thus this policy is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.27 *Actively negotiate with the State Engineer and New Mexico Environment Department to develop policies and regulations to encourage infiltration and injection of treated water into the aquifer, with accompanying return flow credits (Policy #VII.4.c)*

The implementation of this policy is in progress, with the return flow credit issue still being resolved. This policy is seen as a priority going forward and is included as implementation policy R.2 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.28 *Work with neighboring communities to pass legislation to protect water supplies, allocations, and fund studies on water quality and quantity in the Middle Rio Grande Basin (Policy #VII.4.d)*

This policy has not been implemented. The City is still interested in partnering with its neighbors to fund water quality and quantity studies, but no funding for doing so has been available. This policy has been revised to include coordination with neighboring entities (e.g.,

Southern Sandoval County Flood Control Authority [SSCAFCA]) and is included in the implementation plan as implementation policy P.7 for the next five-year planning period.

3.29 *Evaluate water availability for every category of development (residential, commercial, or industrial) and only consider approval for such development when water availability is demonstrated and documented (Policy #VII.5.a)*

This policy has been implemented, and developers are now required to apply to the Water Utility Operations Division regarding the availability of water and wastewater service. The City evaluates availability of these services and approves the development proposal only if it can be supported. Given the completion of this implementation policy, it is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.30 *City planning will consider impacts of water resources in their development and review processes for plans, policies, and regulations; future growth will be consistent with water supplies and costs, and compatible with water rights acquisition (Policy #VII.5.b)*

As discussed in Section 3.29, this policy has been implemented and is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.31 *The cost of future water supplies and water rights will be acknowledged as a capital expense and factored into the development of impact fees, user rates, and any other financial tools used by the City to fund capital programs (Policy #VII.5.c)*

This policy has been implemented and is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year period.

3.32 Perform a detailed review of all planning and zoning requirements as they relate to water use, and revise the requirements to reflect the policies of the Water Resources Management Plan (the review and revision will be a joint effort with the Utilities Department) (Policy #VII.6.a)

This implementation policy is underway and is not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year period.

3.33 Require specific categories of businesses and/or individual businesses that use large volumes of water to file a water conservation plan to be approved by both the City Utilities and City Development Departments (Policy #VII.6.b)

This policy has not been implemented, but is seen as important and is therefore included as implementation policy C.5 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period. An action has been added to reflect that the Water Conservation Office will determine the quantity that constitutes the “large volume” of water use that will require a water conservation plan.

3.34 Require a water conservation plan as part of every new development’s planning process (Policy #VII.6.c)

This policy has not been implemented, but is seen as important and is included as implementation policy C.4 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.35 Increase the number and frequency of neighborhood parks irrigated with reclaimed water, to minimize the desire for turf yards, and to assist in the reduction of landscape irrigation; develop a new policy jointly by the City Development and Parks and Recreation Departments (Policy #VII.6.d)

The implementation of this policy is in progress, and it is seen as a priority going forward. It is covered by one of the other implementation policies (Policy #VII.3.e, Section 3.20), however, and is therefore not included as a separate policy in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.36 *Revise current ordinances and policies to require new developments (residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional) to incorporate xeriscaping and water conserving building technologies (Policy #VII.6.e)*

The City has a landscape ordinance that encourages xeriscaping, and new developments are asked not to plant grass. Beyond landscaping, however, the City does not require that water conserving building technologies be incorporated. The federal government has updated their standards regarding building technologies, and so this is not seen as a City priority going forward. The policy is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.37 *Establish design specifications and water budgets for all new golf courses, common landscape areas, and parks (Policy #VII.6.f)*

The City has a landscape ordinance, but the scope of that ordinance would not cover a new golf course. This policy is seen as important, and it is therefore included as implementation policy C.6 in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.38 *Evaluate the feasibility of dual distribution systems (potable and reclaimed water) for all new developments (Policy #VII.6.g)*

This implementation policy has not been completed and is not a City priority at this time. The policy is thus not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year planning period.

3.39 *Limit plantings in parks, medians, and similar public areas to drought tolerant plants (Policy #VII.6.h)*

This policy has been implemented and is therefore not included in the implementation plan for the next five-year period.

4. 2013-2014 Policy Additions and Reprioritization

The implementation policies proposed for the next five-year WRMP implementation plan are broken into seven categories: conservation, education and outreach, water reuse, water supply and infrastructure, source water protection, economic development, and enforcement. The list of proposed implementation policies is provided as Table 1, along with their respective priorities, specific actions, and responsible parties. Of the original 39 implementation policies, 19 were either kept or revised for inclusion on the updated policies list, and 14 new ones were added, for a total of 33 implementation policies for the next five-year planning period.

4.1 *Additional Implementation Policies*

The new implementation policies that have been added for the next five-year planning period include:

- C.7: Identifying funding for implementation of water conservation measures at City parks. This policy was added due to feedback from the Parks Department; the list of water conserving actions is clear, but there is little funding for their implementation.
- C.8: Review the City's commercial landscaping development standards to determine whether they should be updated. This implementation policy was added due to feedback suggesting that the commercial landscape area requirements be decreased, maintenance requirements and inspections be added, and dead plant replacement be required.
- R.3: Implement an educational component relating to water reuse. This policy was added based on feedback that outreach is needed on this implementation policy.
- I.2: Identify funding for new infrastructure (including water line replacements, new wells, and arsenic treatment facilities). This implementation policy was added due to the large shortfall of existing funds available to address the City's infrastructure needs.

- I.3: Develop an emergency contingency plan for providing water supply in the event of a power failure. This implementation policy was added based on a comment made at the December 2013 public meeting expressing concern that the City is not adequately prepared for continuing to provide water supply in the event of a power failure.
- I.4: Plan for increases in power costs in the future. This implementation policy was added based on a point raised at the December 2013 public meeting that the Public Service Company of New Mexico's (PNM) ability to rely on clean coal will end within a few years and electrical costs will increase as a result.
- P.2: Develop an educational program to teach domestic well users how to prevent aquifer contamination and which water quality parameters they should monitor for. This implementation policy was added to help achieve source water protection, while also providing information relevant to public health.
- P.6: Stress the importance of proper hazardous waste disposal. This implementation policy was added to help achieve source water protection and expand the City's existing hazardous waste disposal programs.
- D.1: Evaluate the City's economic development plan/water budgets and the impact of zoning on water use. This implementation policy was added because the planning participants thought that the City's economic and development planning processes need to do a better job of addressing water budgets and demands.
- D.2: Develop guidelines for allowing development. This implementation policy was added based on comments at the June 2013 meeting from City staff proposing that high-water-using customers should be added only if they bring jobs to the City. One of the participants at the public meeting suggested that the permanence of any new jobs also be addressed.
- F.1: Consider passing a new ordinance that allows the City to place property liens (e.g., on homes) for unpaid water bills. This implementation policy was added on the

suggestion of the City code enforcement staff, due to the high number of delinquent water accounts. Such an ordinance would provide the City more leverage for collection on unpaid water bills.

4.2 Public Meeting Input

A public meeting was held in December 2013 to gather public input on the WRMP revision, and input was sought to ensure that the reprioritization effort reflects current City goals. The implementation policies that were added or revised based on input received at the public meeting are summarized below.

- E.1: The implementation policy that calls for continuing to provide home and business water audits to help achieve water conservation goals was revised to include providing educational materials on the potential monetary savings that can result from conserving water.
- E.4: The implementation policy that calls for encouraging and educating residents about on-site rainwater harvesting/use and efficient irrigation controls was revised to include graywater harvesting and use, soil amendments, and partnering with the Sandoval County Extension Office.
- E.6: The implementation policy that calls for developing a “packaged” educational/informational program for senior, civic, and business groups that addresses water issues was revised to specify that these programs will be cycled (Section 3.12) once they have been developed.
- R.1: The water reuse implementation policy was revised to include reuse for aquifer storage and recovery and encouragement of residents with septic systems to hook into the wastewater utility.

- I.1: Actions for identifying new sources of water were added to include potential trans-basin transfers, wholesale water purchase from the local water providers and purchase of water rights from the industrial customer and other owners of water rights.
- I.3: A new implementation policy was added to develop an emergency contingency plan for providing water supply in the event of a power failure.
- I.4: A new implementation policy was added to plan for anticipated increases in power costs in the future.
- P.3: As a part of the implementation policy that calls for taking action to reduce the potential for groundwater contamination from septic systems, an action was added for educating residents about the benefits of hooking others into the wastewater utility.
- P.7: The implementation policy that calls for working with neighboring communities to network and fund Middle Rio Grande Basin studies was revised to include non-municipal entities in addition to communities (e.g., SSCAFCA).
- D.2: The implementation policy that calls for developing guidelines for allowing development was revised to include addressing the permanence of any jobs that are created.

4.3 Prioritization

Using the results of implementation policy ranking by City staff, priorities were initially set at a water resources management planning meeting held on July 19, 2013. The priorities were updated based on the prioritization exercise that was conducted at the December 14, 2013 public meeting. The implementation policies were assigned a numerical priority with 1 being the highest. Eight policies were given the highest priority ranking:

- C.2: Reduce non-revenue water.
- E.1: Continue providing home and business water audits.

- E.2: Provide additional staff and resources for the water conservation program going forward.
- R.1: Continue implementing the water reuse policy.
- R.2: Actively negotiate with the OSE and NMED regarding aquifer storage and recovery and return flow credits.
- I.1: Identify new sources of water.
- I.2: Identify funding for new infrastructure.
- P.3: Take action to limit the potential for groundwater contamination from septic systems.

4.4 *Rio Rancho Utilities Commission and Governing Body Input*

A presentation was given to the Rio Rancho Utilities Commission (RRUC) on February 18, 2014, summarizing the project progress, schedule, and input received at the December 2013 public meeting, and the RRUC approved the document on June 17, 2014. A presentation was made to the City's Governing Body on August 19, 2014, and a second presentation has been scheduled for September 10, 2014.

5. Summary and Recommendations

As discussed in Section 4.3, eight of the implementation policies were ranked the highest priority. Recommendations that will lead to the successful implementation of these highest priority policies include:

- Improve the leak accounting and reporting system to record the duration, location, volume, and resolution for each leak.
- Replace old sections of vulnerable or high-risk water line.
- Meter all water uses (including water used in fire department trainings).

- Improve the meter reading program.
- Continue implementing the existing, funded home and business water audit program.
- Meet with City leadership to discuss the need for increased conservation program funding and staff, highlighting the importance and successes of the program, funding needs, and future targets.
- Continue implementing the water reuse policy, both for aquifer storage and recovery through direct injection and for irrigation, expanding the program to maximize the beneficial use of all available water sources.
- Maximize the supply available for return flow by encouraging residents with septic systems to hook into the wastewater utility by developing incentives for connection.
- Formulate a plan for how best to negotiate with the OSE and NMED regarding aquifer storage and recovery and return flow credits.
- Continue acquiring new water rights through the existing mechanisms.
- Outline and prioritize the city's infrastructure project needs through the ICIP process and seek grant and loan funds to complete them.
- Educate city residents about the benefits of hooking septic systems onto the wastewater utility.

The Water Conservation Office will take the lead on implementing these recommendations, coordinating with other departments and City leadership as necessary.

References

Wilson and Company. 2004. *City of Rio Rancho water resources management plan: Final report and policy recommendations and policy recommendation implementation plan*. August 1, 2004.

Wrage, M. 2013. Personal communication between Marian Wrage, City of Rio Rancho Environmental Programs Manager, and Amy Ewing, Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Inc. January 29, March 25, June 6, and December 13, 2013.

Wrage, M. 2014. Personal communication between Marian Wrage, City of Rio Rancho Environmental Programs Manager, and Amy Ewing, Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Inc. February 27 and August 25, 2014.

Table 1. 2013-2014 Rio Rancho Water Policy Initiatives
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2013-2014 Strategy	2004 Strategy	Description	Priority ^a	List of Actions	Responsibility	Comments
<i>Conservation</i>						
C.1	VII.1.a.	Reduce per capita water usage from 142 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) to 135 gpcd by 2017 (and evaluate per capita water use by category).	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the public education strategies. 2. Reduce distribution system leaks by replacing vulnerable or high risk water line and by decreasing the response time for fixing leaks when they are identified. 3. Use water audits to identify customer leaks. 	Water Conservation Office and City residents Public Works Department (leak accounting, line replacement)	
C.2	VII.1.b.	Reduce non-revenue water to under 10 percent of the total volume of water produced.	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the leak accounting and reporting system to document the duration, location, volume, and resolution for each leak. 2. Replace old sections of vulnerable or high-risk water line as money is available. 3. Meter all uses, including the water used in fire department trainings (install locks on the hydrants to ensure that all water use is metered). 4. Improve the meter reading program. 	Water Conservation Office Public Works Department (leak accounting, line replacement, metering, and meter reading)	
C.3	VII.1.j.	Expand the current rebate program to include additional incentives for investing in water conservation practices.	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request City funding to pay for the additional water conservation programs, highlighting the activities that the Water Conservation Office has planned for once the program expands. 2. Add a new rebate program for attending a landscape irrigation efficiency course. 	Water Conservation Office	Additional funds will be necessary for implementation.
C.4	VII.6.c.	Develop a standard conservation plan format, and require that each new development adopt a plan that meets the City's standard.	3	Develop a standard conservation plan format for what these water conservation plans must include, determine who will review and approve them, and define the volume of water to be used as the requirement criteria (the water use volume above which a development-specific water conservation plan will be required).	City Utilities Operations Division City Development Department	
C.5	VII.6.b.	Require specific categories of businesses and/or individual businesses that use large volumes of water to file a water conservation plan to be approved by both the City Utilities Operations Division and City Development Department.	3	Develop guidance for what these water conservation plans must include, determine who will review and approve them, and define the volume of water to be used as the requirement criterion. Determine what enforcement will occur along with these plans, or whether their implementation will be voluntary.	City Utilities Operations Division City Development Department	
C.6	VII.6.f.	Establish landscape design specifications and water budgets for all new golf courses, common landscape areas, schools, and parks.	3	Determine who will develop the design specifications and water budgets and who will review and approve them.	City Utilities Operations Division City Development Department Parks Department	
C.7	—	Identify funding for implementation of water conservation measures at City parks. Measures that have already been identified include adding soil amendments, changing grass types (from cool to warm season), replacing old irrigation systems, retrofitting existing irrigation systems with smart irrigation controllers, implementing deep tyne aeration, improving reuse water management, and converting high water use areas that aren't being used to xeriscape.	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a list of water conservation measures, identify the specific areas where each is to be implemented, and develop cost estimates for each proposed project. 2. Apply for funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and/or other sources. 	Water Conservation Office Parks Department	

Table 1. 2013-2014 Rio Rancho Water Policy Initiatives
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2013-2014 Strategy	2004 Strategy	Description	Priority ^a	List of Actions	Responsibility	Comments
C.8	—	Review the City's commercial landscaping development standards and determine whether these requirements should be updated (e.g., decreasing the landscaping requirements, adding maintenance requirements and inspections, and requiring that plants be replaced if they die).	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Put together a task group to review the current requirements that are outlined in the commercial development application packet, and seek public input on whether any changes should be made. Consider adding rules regarding the irrigation systems that can be used. 	City Development Department Water Conservation Office	
<i>Education and Outreach</i>						
E.1	VII.1.d.	Continue providing home and business water audits to help achieve water conservation goals, and provide educational materials on the potential monetary savings that can result from conserving water.	1	Continue implementing this existing, funded program.	Water Conservation Office	This is a funded initiative and is considered to be an ongoing priority.
E.2	VII.1.e.	Provide additional staff and resources for the water conservation program going forward.	1	Highlight the importance and successes of the program, identify funding needs, and request additional City funds for the program each year.	Public Works Department Water Conservation Office	Additional funds will be necessary for implementation.
E.3	VII.1.f.	Fund the design and placement of graphical displays in City facilities and on billboards to show water use, goals for water savings, and water conservation initiatives.	3	Add information to the existing advertisement campaign.	Water Conservation Office	This is a funded initiative, and the Water Conservation Office will be adding information to the advertisement campaign.
E.4	VII.1.i.	Encourage and educate residents about on-site rainwater harvesting and use, graywater harvesting and use, efficient irrigation controls, and soil amendments.	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Add links to the City website describing on-site water harvesting of rainwater and graywater. Put together a training course regarding efficient irrigation controls for the parks department, schools, irrigation businesses, and the public. Partner with the Sandoval County Extension Office to provide educational materials regarding soil amendments. 	Water Conservation Office, with input from the Building Division and the Parks Department	
E.5	VII.2.a.	Continue consulting with and improving the partnership with Rio Rancho Public Schools to implement a robust water resources educational curriculum, instituting a formal program at two grade levels based upon available curriculums.	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Request City funding to pay for the additional water conservation programs, highlighting the activities that the Water Conservation Office has planned for once the program expands. Expand the partnership to include a high school student internship program, assisting the Water Conservation Office with water audits and other programs. 	Water Conservation Office	Additional funds will be necessary for implementation.
E.6	VII.2.b.	Develop a "packaged" educational/informational program for senior, civic, and business groups that address water issues, and repeat the programs on a quarterly basis (i.e., cycle the program once developed).	3	Request additional water conservation program funding, highlighting the activities that the Water Conservation Office has planned for once the program expands.	Water Conservation Office	Additional funds will be necessary for implementation.
<i>Water Reuse</i>						
R.1	VII.3.e.	Continue implementing the Water Reuse Strategy (1) for aquifer storage and recovery via direct injection, and (2) at City facilities (e.g., schools, medians, golf courses). This strategy includes large- and small-scale water reuse programs, reuse for aquifer recharge, irrigation and other non-potable uses, and development of reuse distribution and storage facilities. Keep up with any changes in technology that may affect the reuse projects.	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the water reuse program to maximize the beneficial use of all available water sources. Encourage residents with septic systems to hook onto the wastewater utility, in an effort to increase the supply of treated wastewater available for reuse. 	Public Works Department with consultants	

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2013-2014 Strategy	2004 Strategy	Description	Priority ^a	List of Actions	Responsibility	Comments
R.2	VII.4.c.	Actively negotiate with the State Engineer and New Mexico Environment Department to develop policies and regulations to encourage infiltration and injection of treated water into the aquifer, with accompanying return flow credits.	1	Continue discussing aquifer storage and recovery and return flow credits with the OSE and NMED.	Public Works Department with consultants	
R.3	—	Implement an educational component relating to water reuse.	3	1. Prepare a fact sheet on water reuse and the City's water reuse projects, send it out with customer water bills, and include the information in the City's quarterly newsletter. 2. Issue recommendations on how to sustain landscaping using reuse water. 3. Post information for the public on the City website regarding what water harvesting is allowed by NMED.	Public Works Department Water Conservation Office	
<i>Water Supply and Infrastructure</i>						
I.1	VII.3.c.	Identify new sources of water.	1	1. Continue acquiring new water rights through existing mechanisms. 2. Evaluate the potential for importing water as a new source of supply (including the potential for transbasin transfers). 3. Pursue a wholesale water purchase agreement with the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority. 4. Evaluate the potential of purchasing water rights from industrial customers.	Public Works Department City attorneys	
I.2	—	Identify funding for new infrastructure (including water line replacements, new wells, and arsenic treatment facilities).	1	Outline and prioritize the City's infrastructure projects and seek City, grant, and loan funds to complete them.	Public Works Department	
I.3	—	Develop an emergency contingency plan for providing water supply in the event of a power failure.	2	Evaluate which assets are the most critical to continued water supply service in the event of a power failure, and develop a plan for each, outlining steps for uninterrupted operations.	City Utilities Operations Division Public Works Department	
I.4	—	Plan for expected increases in power costs in the future.	3	1. Evaluate the current power costs and research the magnitude of potential future increases. 2. Evaluate the current City budget's ability to cover increased power costs and develop a plan for increasing rates to cover increased power costs, if necessary.	City Utilities Operations Division Public Works Department	
<i>Source Water Protection</i>						
P.1	VII.3.g	Actively manage the City domestic well permit program.	3	1. Enhance the training of the CH2M HILL OMI contract staff on how to actively manage the domestic well program. 2. Consider reducing the domestic well permitted use from 3 to 1 acre-feet per year when property ownership changes (instead of only when a well is repaired or replaced).	Water Conservation Office, working with OMI contract staff.	

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2013-2014 Strategy	2004 Strategy	Description	Priority ^a	List of Actions	Responsibility	Comments
P.2	—	Develop an educational program to teach domestic well users about how to prevent aquifer contamination and what water quality parameters they should monitor for.	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further develop and distribute the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) source water protection educational materials and contact domestic well users about their water quality. 2. Contact the NMED Drinking Water Bureau about conducting water fair events (providing quality testing to domestic well users) in Rio Rancho every few years. 	Water Conservation Office, working with OMI contract staff.	
P.3	VII.3.i.	Take action to limit and reduce the potential for groundwater contamination from septic systems by extending wastewater utilities into areas not currently served by the City sewer system, encourage property owners to connect to the City system when City sewer becomes available, and decommission any on-site facilities.	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage water customers to tie in to the wastewater system by developing incentives for connection (a wastewater master plan for the City's full build of the system has been completed by a consultant). 2. Educate City residents about the benefits of hooking others onto the wastewater utility. 	City Utilities Operations Division City Development Department	
P.4	VII.2.c.	Develop and distribute educational materials about septic tank maintenance and its relationship to aquifer protection.	3	Further develop and distribute the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) source water protection educational materials.	Water Conservation Office (as part of the source water protection program)	
P.5	—	Stress the importance of proper hazardous waste disposal.	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute educational materials regarding the City's existing hazardous waste disposal program, including the prescription medication take back program, to hospitals, pharmacies, nursing homes, and doctor's offices. 2. Provide local pharmacies and hospitals with a handout to give out with prescriptions detailing proper disposal. 	Water Conservation Office (as part of the source water protection program)	
P.6	VII.4.d.	Work with neighboring communities and/or entities to network and fund studies on water quality and quantity in the Middle Rio Grande Basin.	3	Seek funding to pay for collaborative water quantity and quality studies. An example of a networking partner would be Southern Sandoval County Flood Control Authority.	City of Rio Rancho	
<i>Economic Development</i>						
D.1	—	Evaluate the City's economic development plan/water budgets and the impact of zoning on water use.	2	<p>Develop a task group to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review City zoning and the water budgets outlined in the BHI Water Master Plan. 2. Develop an economic formula for whether to approve new developments, based on the number of jobs that will be created per acre-foot of water demand (taking water availability into account when proposed developments are evaluated and involving the Public Works department in decisions regarding proposed development). 3. Update the City's economic development plan, adding a section that addresses water supply. 4. Consider passing a new ordinance addressing water demand and job creation that includes impact fee waivers for new customers that bring new jobs. 	Public Works Department Water Conservation Office City Development Department	

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2013-2014 Strategy	2004 Strategy	Description	Priority ^a	List of Actions	Responsibility	Comments
D.2	—	Develop guidelines for allowing development (including addressing the permanence of the jobs that are created).	2	Review the existing Specific Area Plans, discuss the need for additional Specific Area Plans, and meet to discuss the development of guidelines.	Water Conservation Office City Development Department	
<i>Enforcement</i>						
F.1	—	Consider passing a new ordinance that allows the City to place property liens (e.g., on homes for unpaid water bills).	2	Develop a task group to draft the new ordinance, meet with City officials about its importance, and get it on a City ballot.	Code Enforcement Public Works Department Water Conservation Office	

^a Priorities were initially set using the results of initiative ranking by City staff at a water resources management planning meeting that was held on July 19, 2013. The priorities were updated based on the prioritization exercise that was conducted at the public meeting held on December 14, 2013. The initiatives with the highest priority have been assigned a value of 1.