

Conservation is a Long-Term Commitment

The announcement of a [Tier 1 Colorado River Shortage for 2022](#) reinforces the importance of being responsible with all of the water we have. We understand significant challenges lie ahead for the Colorado River, especially with the projections within the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's August 24-month study that shows a hotter and drier future has become our reality.



Water conservation and efficiency are part of our cities' long-term management strategies, while Arizona residents have embraced it into their lifestyle. Although conservation by itself will not resolve water challenges, having it rooted in our daily actions does enable us to better weather drought and shortage. This behavior will be critical to our resiliency, just as it always has.

For decades, Arizona and its water providers have been proactive in developing water conservation because we know we live in an arid State. Since the early 1980s, when conservation was mandated in the State's most populated areas, water providers have had to achieve increasingly rigorous requirements based on per capita use targets and appropriate conservation measures. Water providers in the Phoenix and Tucson areas have met and even exceeded those targets. Meeting these conservation requirements is factored into each AMWUA city having a [100-year Assured Water Supply Designation](#) from the State to ensure reliable water supplies to support responsible growth.

Municipal Water Providers have moved beyond simply meeting State requirements to implement water conservation and efficiency programs as a critical component of their long-term water management efforts. Phoenix and Tucson area water providers are recognized leaders in water conservation. Their efforts have brought forth reductions in per capita demand, enabling cities to meet growth with existing supplies and store water for use in times of shortage. For example, the [City of Phoenix](#) has reduced its water use by 30% per capita over the last 20 years, even with an increase in population of over 400,000 people.

The AMWUA cities collectively implement more than 300 best management practices and have implemented ordinances designed to reduce water use and increase water efficiency indoors and outdoors for residential and non-residential sectors. In addition to meeting Statewide mandates, all AMWUA cities regulate low-water-use landscaping, limit turf (grass), prohibit water waste, and have plumbing code requirements. These regulations have helped cities advance water conservation. The AMWUA cities have also built tailored [water conservation programs](#) that best assist their residents and businesses use water efficiently.

To increase indoor water efficiency, Arizona adopted the International Plumbing Standard in 1994, requiring low-water-use plumbing fixtures for new construction and replacement. This was before the adoption by the Federal government. This led to the development of and the promotion of water-efficient technology that used less water without the user having to change behavior. This included bringing about the 1.6 gallon-per-flush toilets, the 2.5 gallon-per-minute faucets and showerheads, and other water-efficient fixtures and appliances in new construction and when replacing existing fixtures.

Outdoors, landscaping in irrigated public medians, and rights-of-way have been restricted to only allow low-water-use plants identified in the Phoenix area Regulatory Plant List since the early 1980s. It's important to note that turf has not been allowed since. AMWUA worked with the State and other conservation professionals to develop the regulatory list of more than 900 plants that can survive in our rough environment with minimal water. This plant list is incorporated into municipal codes, used by HOAs, and embraced by residents, businesses, and the green industry across the Valley. The low-water-use plant list has significantly increased the acceptance of attractive and suitable low-water-use landscapes here in the desert.

All of these efforts have helped us avoid needing to impose water restrictions during this time of prolonged drought and in the face of shortage. That is why we must all continue to do our part. As our history has proven, today's actions safeguard our water now and for future generations. Residents and businesses in the AMWUA cities can take full advantage of all the city programs, resources, and rebates available to help do precisely that.

In the end, our collective commitment to conservation will help increase our resiliency during challenging times. We must never forget that we live in the desert, and water is precious. That's why conservation matters, and it does make a difference.

For over 50 years, the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more water information, visit www.amwua.org.