Water Management Resources for Local Government

The Ahwahnee Water Principles
A Blueprint for Regional Sustainability

GUIDEBOOK NOW AVAILABLE

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* ➤

Water – how we capture it, treat it, use it, control it, manage it and release it – has a greater impact on quality of life, municipal budgets and day-to-day policymaking than more headline-grabbing issues. It is an issue that local governments cannot afford to ignore.

Clean, high quality water is inextricably **tied to economic health**. Further, state laws mandate that local governments take issues such as water supply, stormwater management, pollution, flood control and liability seriously. Dismissing these mandates can lead to **serious costs for local government** in terms of stormwater permits, mandatory water quality fines and stalled economic growth.

The least expensive method of assuring a clean and adequate water supply is to **implement land use decisions** that take water supply and quality into account.

The Local Government Commission created the Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource-Efficient Land Use to **provide local decision-makers with practical actions**, land use policies and projects that they can take as they face major challenges with water contamination, stormwater runoff, flood damage liability and concerns about whether there will be a reliable water supply for current and future residents.

A new 85-page guidebook, *The Ahwanhee Water Principles: A Blueprint for Regional Sustainability*, outlines **a practical approach to water-wise land use**, and provides model projects and contacts for communities that are already implementing the principles.

It provides important information about federal and state laws that impact local government and offers references to additional **resource materials** and information. A special section on **water elements** provides model general plan language gleaned from existing general plans and other planning documents adopted by communities throughout the state.

Get your copy today!

- **Order printed versions of the 85-page guidebook ($20)**
- **Download a free copy at www2.lgc.org/bookstore**

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.

Local Government Commission

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