



Environmental Services

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MEMORANDUM
NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD

DATE: November 19, 2015
TO: Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: John Bartholow, on behalf of the Natural Resources Advisory Board (NRAB)
SUBJECT: Needed: A More Aspirational Water Efficiency Goal

The NRAB has received two briefings regarding upcoming revisions to the Water Conservation Plan. We are pleased to see the progress our community has made and we fully support the strategic thinking about how we can continue to make even more progress in the future.

However, the NRAB would like to see Council adopt a more aspirational goal than the proposed 130 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) by 2030. **The NRAB believes that a goal of 125 gpcd by the year 2025 would ultimately prove achievable.** Here's why:

Our city's excellent progress on a raft of environmental goals is well known, from climate action to zero waste and Fort Zed. In almost every case the initial goals were, at first, believed to be largely unachievable by many people. Through excellent leadership, superb staff work, and our enlightened community, those initial goals proved far easier to meet or exceed -- even ahead of schedule. As these initiatives have evolved, new and more aspirational goals, still doubted by many, are proving to be the motivating propellant behind equally innovative progress towards those aims.

Our initial goals for water conservation have followed suit by being arguably too conservative. The 1992 goal of 195 gpcd over eight years was reached in half that time. The 2003 goal of 185 gpcd over seven years was reached in just one year (admittedly because of the drought). The 2010 goal of 140 gpcd over 10 years was really not a stretch goal at all because we were already meeting that goal.

In light of our experience with water and other natural resources, the proposed 2015 goal of 130 gpcd over 15 years cannot be considered aspirational and is unlikely to spark the momentum necessary to demonstrate real leadership in water efficiency.

Goals must be established in context. For water conservation and efficiency, consumer attitudes and behavior, as well as technology, are galloping forward. A paradigm of Net-Zero Water is already being discussed. Further, it is clear that water conservation has direct economic benefits and supports other city-wide goals such as greenhouse gas emissions since drinking and waste water treatment are so energy hungry.

We recognize that setting truly impossible goals would be frustrating at a minimum and potentially wasteful at a maximum. Some 'experts' have calculated that it would be extremely difficult to

consistently go below about 115 gpcd in urban areas along the Front Range. But progress in other portions of the arid west belies such a conservative plateau.

We know that this issue has been studied far more by a water utility working group and perhaps there are issues such as consequences to water or wastewater rates we do not fully appreciate. But from our point of view, a goal of 125 gpcd by the year 2025 would be achievable. Plus, it's the right thing to do!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John M. Bartholow", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Bartholow
Chair, Natural Resources Advisory Board

cc: Darin Atteberry
Susie Gordon