



# MUNICIPAL UTILITIES FRIDAY PACKET

June 26, 2020

## Engaging Residents with WaterSmart

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Tempe's water conservation program ensures that one of our community's most precious resources is used efficiently and responsibly through effective water-saving best practices and targeted outreach. During a global pandemic, water conservation outreach and education has continued through the use of technology and online resources to help our residents prepare for the summer peak water use season.

### Large Volume Residential Customer Outreach



A large volume residential customer (LVRC) is any household that used more than 40,000 gallons of water in any month during 2019. Evaluation of the success of last summer's intense outreach efforts to LVRCs determined that direct email campaigns and one-on-one conversations, coupled with print and social media outreach, were the most successful strategies in increasing WaterSmart registrations. In 2020, staff continued these strategies and added direct calls to all LVRCs who had phone numbers associated with their water accounts and had not registered for WaterSmart. This

year to date, all LVRCs have received at least one form of outreach regarding Tempe's water conservation programs, with many having been contacted by numerous means. Outreach efforts to LVRCs and other residents is ongoing and for 2020 includes:

- 2,586 phone calls to LVRCs, resulting in 375 WaterSmart registrations and 245 new emails collected for leak alerts
- 36 direct individual email blasts and newsletters to 17,958 water utility customers (totaling 84,091 individual emails), including all LVRCs
- 5 direct mailings (postcards and *Tempe Today* articles, totaling approximately 189,001 individual mailings) to all water utility customers, including 2 postcards specific to LVRCs
- 45 social media posts on Facebook and Nextdoor



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June 26, 2020

## Low-Income Residential Customer Outreach

With a goal of ensuring water conservation outreach efforts target all Tempe residents, staff recently started collaborating with internal and external groups to better understand how to effectively reach Tempe's low-income residents. As part of this effort, geographic areas in Tempe that have high percentages of low-income residents were cross-referenced with water meter data to develop a potential list of outreach candidates. In the coming months, staff will be surveying residents who live in these areas, as well as those who utilize services through Human Services, to identify strategies for increasing water conservation in our communities in need. Through these efforts, residents will advance their ability to utilize water efficiently and, subsequently, reduce their utility bill while saving water. In a recent effort, the Water Utilities Division (WUD) collaborated with the Finance Division's Customer Services Section in promoting utility resources (including water conservation and efficiency programs) to 1,095 residents who were behind on paying their utility bills. Efforts such as these will be tracked and measured for effectiveness and supplemented with new and creative means of outreach in the coming months.

## Rebate Efficacy Studies

In the spring of 2020, work began on a study to provide data concerning the effectiveness of Tempe's water conservation rebate programs. Highlights of the findings to date are:

- The average water savings for the High-Efficiency Irrigation Rebate in 2018 was 82,427 gallons per household, per year. Households that installed the combination of smart controllers, rain sensors and spray nozzles achieved the most real-world water savings. When installed alone, spray nozzles achieved the most water savings, followed by smart controllers. To date, this rebate has been utilized primarily by households with grass lawns; however, data indicated a potential for households without grass to achieve additional water savings from efficiency upgrades, such as smart controllers and sensors.
- Analysis of aerial imagery of homes that participated in the Landscape Conversion Rebate Program during the last 30 years found that 95.6 percent of homes remained converted to desert lush landscapes. Individuals who converted back to turf did so after keeping desert lush landscape for an average of 6.6 years. Each square foot of turf





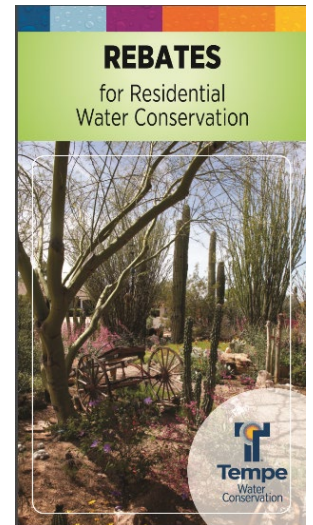
# MUNICIPAL UTILITIES FRIDAY PACKET

June 26, 2020

converted to desert lush landscape saves an estimated 27 gallons of water per year.

- A water savings analysis of non-irrigators (those with little or no outdoor watering) found an average decrease of 9.1 percent in water consumption after participating in the High-Efficiency Toilet Rebate Program. This confirmed a hypothesis that water savings from this program was not solely due to variations in outdoor water use.
- A survey of previous High-Efficiency Toilet Rebate participants found that the majority of past program participants upgraded their toilets in response to the incentive or had the incentive in mind when making a new toilet purchase.

As part of our efforts to be data and performance driven, staff will continue to analyze the efficacy of rebate programs and pursue improvements that drive water savings.



## Virtual Workshops and Water Consultations

Tempe offered its first water conservation workshops live online in May and June. The Landscape Watering 101 workshops were attended by 174 residents. The attendance was more than five times the average (30 residents) at previously held in-person sustainable landscape workshops. A tree pruning program was offered in late June featuring Tempe's Urban Forester as a guest speaker, reaching a total of 24 residents. Future topics include rainwater harvesting, finding and fixing leaks and desert lush plant selection. Video recordings of the workshops are posted on the Tempe 11 YouTube Channel. This program is offered in partnership with Tempe Public Library.

Water Consultations continue to be offered to Tempe residents through a variety of virtual resources, including phone video applications. Since March, 98 successful consultations have been performed.

As Tempe continues to reopen services, staff is able to provide support to continue meeting residents' water conservation and water efficiency needs.





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June 26, 2020

## Program Results and Overview

Participation in water conservation programs is tracked for both broad-based and targeted outreach efforts. Some of the metrics utilized to measure outreach efforts appear in the following charts:

### WaterSmart Registration Rate Citywide as of June 21, 2020

2018: less than 1%

2019: 9.7%

2020 YTD: Current: 16.7%

2020 Goal: 20%



Many of these metrics can be tied directly to water savings through increases in efficiency. To date, an estimated 181.5 million gallons of water was saved by conservation efforts in 2020. Tempe's water conservation program remains committed to effective water-saving best practices, targeted outreach and measurable outcomes (whenever possible) to ensure that one of Tempe's most precious resources is used efficiently and responsibly.

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