
Progress Report 1991 - 1998

Office of Water Conservation

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Overview

House Bill 91-1154 was passed in 1991 as collaborative effort among members of the water, agricultural and environmental communities to address water efficiency needs of the state. The bill established the Office of Water Conservation (OWC) within the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to oversee a program which would act as a clearing house for water use efficiency information, provide technical assistance to and work with water providers, coordinate planning and implementation of state agency water use efficiency plans, administrate financial assistance from the CWCB Construction Fund in the amount of \$1,000,000 for demonstration and pilot projects concerning water use efficiency, and provide information to the legislature on the efficient use of the state's water supplies.

Water use efficiency can bring about permanent water use reductions, reduce demands during emergencies and help manage peak water use demands. This in turn can avoid the need for expensive construction or upgrading of wastewater treatment plants and drinking water supply plants.

Highlights of the program include:

- Establishment of an information clearinghouse.
- Administration of grants for 27 municipal water efficiency demonstration projects (\$500,000 through HB 91-1154).
- Development of water use efficiency plans for construction and renovation of state facilities.
- Technical assistance to water providers and state agencies for initiation of water efficiency measures (62 water providers).
- Administration of agricultural/multipurpose grant program (\$500,000 - 7 projects through SB 92-87)
- Water audit of Governor's mansion.
- Developed numerous public information and education efforts regarding efficient use of water resources.
- Developed numerous partnerships concerning water use efficiency and information.



Duties of the OWC include:

Acting as a repository for water use efficiency information;

Providing technical assistance to municipal and other urban water providers and state agencies concerning water efficiency measures;

Coordinates planning in the implementation of water use efficiency plans for state agencies;

Administration of financial assistance for water use efficiency programs

Water Efficiency Planning



Nine conservation measures should be considered in any efficiency plan as outlined in the bill. Those measures are:

- 1. Water efficient fixtures;*
- 2. Low water use landscapes and irrigation;*
- 3. Water efficient industrial/commercial water-using processes;*
- 4. Water reuse systems, potable and non-potable;*
- 5. Distribution system leak repair;*
- 6. Dissemination of information;*
- 7. Water rate structures to encourage efficiency;*
- 8. Regulatory measures; and*
- 9. Incentives to implement water use efficiency techniques.*

By June 4, 1996, HB 91-1154 required that water efficiency plans be developed with the assistance of the OWC staff, for water providers that retail 2,000 acre-feet or more of water per year. These plans are to encourage domestic, commercial, industrial and public facility customers to use water more efficiently. This is done on a voluntary basis since no enforcement mechanisms exist should a provider choose not to comply with the requirements of the bill.

In 1991, there were only a few Colorado communities with water conservation plans. There are now over 50 communities with existing plans or plans in the work and more than 804,000 acre feet of water subject to the planning requirement. OWC estimates that an additional 10,000 acre-feet of water will annually be affected by this planning effort in the future and continually identifies additional entities whose delivery of water exceeds the 2,000 acre-foot level, bringing them under the requirements of the planning requirement.

Water use efficiency plans are site specific and tailored to meet the needs of the implementing entity. Therefore, anticipated water savings vary and are difficult to measure. Most entities have chosen to implement measures that are lowest in cost, with distribution system leak repair and dissemination of information regarding water use efficiency measures receiving the most use in efficiency plans to date. As the program proceeds during future years, the development of baseline data will assist in measuring true water savings as a result of the plans.