

Section 1 - Introduction

Goal 1.1 – Ensure an adequate water supply in terms of quantity, dependability and quality for existing and future development.

Policy 1.1.1 – Adequate water is a critical factor in facilitating future growth and it is incumbent upon the County to coordinate land use planning with water demand, efficiency and conservation.

Goal 1.2 – Integrate water and land use planning.

Goal 1.3 – Promote awareness of environmental issues associated with water use.

Section 2 - Public Engagement

Goal 2.1 – Reach a broad geographic range of community members and stakeholders and gather feedback on location specific input, strategy preferences, and open-ended feedback.

Policy 2.1.1 – Share educational and project specific materials.

Policy 2.1.2 – Educational campaigns should be pursued to involve the community and provide a broader basis of understanding regarding water supplies and conservation strategies.

Policy 2.1.3 – Communicate and gather input on complex, and at times, contentious water and land use considerations.

Section 3 - Water Service Providers

Goal 3.1 – Promote cooperation among water providers to achieve increased efficiencies on infrastructure.

Policy 3.1.1 – Encourage advanced planning and cooperation among water providers to reduce the overall number of water main lines running through the County.

Goal 3.2 – Promote cooperation among water providers to achieve increased efficiencies on treatment.

Policy 3.2.1 – Where possible, treatment plants should provide potable water to different water districts in order to save on maintenance and operational costs.

Goal 3.3 – Promote cooperation among water providers to achieve increased efficiencies on reuse.

Policy 3.3.1 – Reuse of wastewater flows should be encouraged, to the greatest extent feasible, in order to increase water supply and to help diversify the supply portfolios of water providers.

Goal 3.4 – Promote cooperation between water providers to achieve increased efficiencies on storage.

Policy 3.4.1 – Encourage the storage of water during off-peak demand periods (winter months) to be used during high demand months (summer months).

Goal 3.5 – Encourage water providers to adapt to drought conditions.

Policy 3.5.1 – In an arid region with limited water supplies, extreme weather conditions should be taken into account by water providers in order to deliver a more reliable and safe water supply.

Goal 3.6 – Develop and maintain partnerships with water providers.

Policy 3.6.1 – The County should engage with water providers to share issues of mutual concern on a periodic basis and work collaboratively to address long-term water supply concerns.

Policy 3.6.2 – Water providers should work with neighboring entities to provide and plan for growth between their respective boundaries.

Goal 3.7 – Encourage the interconnection of infrastructure owned by water providers and projects that will have access to more than one water source, both to foster conjunctive use and to better accommodate water supply emergencies.

Section 4 - Water Supplies

Goal 4.1 – Develop an understanding of the differences in water supply sources, and any water quality issues within the County.

- Policy 4.1.1 – Protect and enhance the quality of drinking water in the County.
- Policy 4.1.2 – Encourage more systematic monitoring and reporting of water quality in individual wells.
- Policy 4.1.3 – Support enhanced monitoring of sources of surface and tributary ground water in the County.
- Policy 4.1.4 – Work collaboratively with water providers, stormwater management agencies, federal agencies, and State agencies to ensure drinking water sources are protected from contamination and meet or exceed established standards.

Goal 4.2 – Support the efficient use of water supplies.

- Policy 4.2.1 – Encourage stakeholders to develop methods which allow more effective monitoring of the adjudicated water rights in the County.
- Policy 4.2.2 – Allow for the potential to import new and preferably renewable water supplies from outside the various planning areas, potentially including the Arkansas River, in order to reduce the dependency on non-renewable water supplies and accommodate new development.
- Policy 4.2.3 – Support studies to determine options for how water providers can secure and deliver a more permanent, long-term water supply.

Goal 4.3 – Collaborate with the State and other stakeholders to extend the economic life of the Denver Basin aquifers.

- Policy 4.3.1 – Denver Basin Groundwater should be preserved as much as practical through water conservation and efficiency, extending the economic useful life.
- Policy 4.3.2 – Encourage the systematic monitoring and careful administration of the bedrock aquifers to avoid over-allocation of groundwater.
- Policy 4.3.3 – Incentivize the use of deeper Arapahoe and Laramie Fox Hills aquifers by central water providers, leaving or deferring the use of the shallower aquifers for the more dispersed domestic well users.

Policy 4.3.4 – Encourage other monitoring programs and studies which could result in an increased understanding of the quality, quantity, and rate of depletion of available water supplies in the area, including but not limited to private wells.

Policy 4.3.5 – Encourage plans to recharge the Upper Black Squirrel Aquifer if such plans are based on sound science and can be demonstrated to not adversely impact water quality or water rights, with a preference for those plans which will maintain or enhance the available water supply at a regional scale.

Policy 4.3.6 – Encourage well monitoring through-out the County, with an emphasis on the Denver Basin aquifer fringe areas.

Goal 4.4 – Protect and enhance the quality, quantity, and dependability of water supplies.

Policy 4.4.1 – Encourage and support, as appropriate, legislation that preserves and protects all drinking water sources in the County.

Goal 4.5 – Plan for water resources in a thoughtful way that recognizes the non-renewable nature of water resources in the area, accommodates existing and historical uses, and allows for sustainable, planned growth.

Policy 4.5.1 – Encourage continued collection and analysis of data for the purpose of better determining the extent and availability of groundwater in areas which do not overlie either the Denver Basin or a studied alluvial aquifer.

Policy 4.5.2 – Review the data and analysis of groundwater studies, as appropriate, to determine if regulatory modifications are needed and consider implementation.

Goal 4.6 – Promote collaboration among the County, municipalities, water and wastewater service providers and regional and State agencies through the use of Memoranda of Understanding or similar arrangements.

Policy 4.6.1 – Explore establishing Memoranda of Understanding to address shared source water protection and mutual concerns impacting water quality.

Section 5 - Projected Water Supply Needs

Goal 5.1 – Identify the potential water supply gap at projected full development build-out (2060).

Policy 5.1.1 – Consistent with the State Water Plan, the County will work with water providers to address and implement methods to match water supply with the projected 2060 water demand.

Goal 5.2 – Identify regional opportunities and barriers to satisfying water supply needs at full development build-out (2060).

Policy 5.2.1 – Assist water providers, to the greatest extent practicable, in any future efforts to prepare demand forecasts by sharing information about population growth and new industries or developments in the County that will increase the demand for water.

Policy 5.2.2 – Recognize the water supply challenges and limitations inherent in each of the regional planning areas, with particular emphasis placed on Regional Planning Area 3 (Falcon), as a result of current reliance on non-renewable Denver Basin wells and the renewable, but limited and over-appropriated, Upper Black Squirrel alluvium.

Policy 5.2.3 – Periodically update the County land use master plan to better identify and plan for areas of future growth, in a manner that is consistent with this Water Master Plan, as may be amended from time to time.

Policy 5.2.4 – Encourage the locating of new development where it can take advantage of existing or proposed water supply projects that would allow shared infrastructure costs.

Goal 5.3 – Reduce end user water consumption in the County.

Policy 5.3.1 – Evaluate cluster development alternatives to determine if water savings could occur.

Policy 5.3.2 – Promote water conscious developments through improved land-use policies.

Goal 5.4 – Promote the long-term use of renewable water.

Goal 5.5 – Identify any water supply issues early on in the land development process.

Policy 5.5.1 – Discourage individual wells for new subdivisions with 2.5 acre or smaller average lot sizes, especially in the near-surface aquifers, when there is a reasonable opportunity to connect to an existing central system, alternatively, or construct a new central waters supply system when the economies of scale to do so can be achieved.

Goal 5.6 – Protect property rights.

Section 6 - Closing the Gap

Goal 6.0 – Require adequate water availability for proposed development.

Policy 6.0.1 – Continue to require documentation of the adequacy or sufficiency of water, as appropriate, for proposed development.

Policy 6.0.2 – Encourage developments to incorporate water efficiency principles.

Policy 6.0.3 – Encourage water and wastewater infrastructure projects to be sited and designed in a manner which promotes compatibility with adjoining uses, and provides reasonable mitigation of any adverse visibility and other environmental impacts.

Policy 6.0.4 – Encourage development that incentivizes and incorporates water efficient landscaping principles.

Policy 6.0.5 – Support implementation of water provider conservation projects.

Policy 6.0.6 – Support appropriate efforts by water providers to incorporate drought conditions in their supply and demand forecasts in providing future and existing water supplies.

Policy 6.0.7 – Encourage the submission of a water supply plan documenting an adequate supply of water to serve a proposed development at the earliest stage of the development process as allowed under state law. The water supply plan should be prepared by the applicant in collaboration with the respective water provider.

Policy 6.0.8 – Encourage development patterns and higher density, mixed use developments in appropriate locations that propose to incorporate meaningful water conservation measures.

Policy 6.0.9 – Consider amendments to the Land Development Code to incorporate water efficiency standards, such as:

- Allowances for xeriscaping or native and drought-tolerant landscaping,
- Allowances for water efficient irrigation techniques,
- Minimizing the percentage of landscaped area covered with non-native turf, and
- Increasing the percentage of landscape areas that can be covered with non-living landscape material.

Policy 6.0.10 – Encourage land use proposals to expressly declare water source(s), quality, quantity, and sustainability in terms of years and number of single family equivalents.

Policy 6.0.11– Continue to limit urban level development to those areas served by centralized utilities.

Section 6.1 - Water Efficiency

Goal 6.1.1 – Identify strategies that can close the build-out (2060) gap.

Policy 6.1.1.1 – Prioritize actions and improvements to address water supply gaps.

Goal 6.1.2 – Promote water conservation.

Policy 6.1.2.1 – Follow best management practices to maximize aquifer recharge, including supporting the use of greenway corridors, the maintenance of drainage ways in their natural state, and the avoidance of large amounts of impervious cover for recharge areas.

Policy 6.1.2.2 – Encourage and accommodate water conservation practices for existing and new developments.

Policy 6.1.2.3 – Encourage water providers to implement best management practices for reducing water demand.

Policy 6.1.2.4 – Review and revise, as appropriate, the standards of the various zoning districts to ensure they are consistent with promoting water efficient development.

Policy 6.1.2.5 – Incorporate water efficiency measures in all new County facilities and projects, as appropriate. Similarly, consider retro-fitting fixtures and landscaping at older facilities with new, water efficient alternatives.

Policy 6.1.2.6 – Encourage special districts to include water conservation measures in their utility master plans.

Policy 6.1.2.7 – Encourage water providers to develop water resiliency plans.

Policy 6.1.2.8 – Coordinate with water providers to prepare a water conservation handbook to educate residents and businesses about ways to conserve water in their homes and businesses. The handbook should be accompanied by a public outreach program.

Policy 6.1.2.9 – Encourage water providers to develop and implement incentive packages and standards that reduce water demand and promote water conservation.

Policy 6.1.2.10 – Encourage water suppliers in the County to use reclaimed water for irrigation and other appropriate uses.

Policy 6.1.2.11 – Collaborate with home builders and developers on zoning code amendments that promote decreased water demand coupled with water conservation for residential developments where economical.

Policy 6.1.2.12 – Support proposed developments that incorporate water efficiency measures for open spaces and lawns.

Policy 6.1.2.13 – Consider evaluating the 300-year rule to ensure that its applicability supports the goals and objectives of the Water Master Plan.

Goal 6.1.3 – Identify ways to provide landscaping flexibility in design where requiring strict compliance with the County’s landscaping standards would be contrary to the goals of this Plan.

Policy 6.1.3.1 – Encourage new developments that incorporate water conservation techniques such as xeric landscaping.

Policy 6.1.3.2 – Provide developers with clear landscape guidance that results in attractive landscaping and reduced water requirements.

Policy 6.1.3.3 – Encourage sustainable landscaping that is tailored to the variations of climate zones across the County.

Policy 6.1.3.4 – Consider amending the Land Development Code to allow for modified landscaping options based on water source, available water supplies, and climate zones across El Paso County.

Policy 6.1.3.5 – Work with representatives of the landscape industry, along with property owners and managers, to promote incorporating water conservation measures for non-residential developments.

Policy 6.1.3.6 – Support lower system development fees (tap fees) for builders that use water efficient landscaping.

Section 6.2 - Water Reuse

Goal 6.2.1 – Increase regional water reuse and conservation to better optimize available water supplies.

Policy 6.2.1.1 – Support efforts by water providers to effectively and environmentally implement potable and non-potable water re-use including augmentation.

Policy 6.2.1.2 – Encourage re-use of treated wastewater for irrigation and other acceptable uses when feasible.

Policy 6.2.1.3 – Consider opportunities to demonstrate the benefits of using non-potable sources of water and to dispel negative attitudes.

Policy 6.2.1.4 – Encourage land uses which accommodate the reuse of water including capture of non-consumptively used water within the basin and use of reclaimed water for irrigation, within legal parameters and providing that water quality is maintained.

Policy 6.2.1.5 – Support plans for the siting of additional treatment plants or modification of existing facilities to allow for more effective use of non-potable water and to promote plans for responsible aquifer recharge.

Policy 6.2.1.6 – Consider allowing higher residential densities for new developments, in appropriate locations, where such developments will be served by water providers that are optimizing their supplies through established reuse and conservation measures.

Policy 6.2.1.7 – Explore options for the use of non-potable water and further research into the use of reclaimed and renewable water.

Goal 6.2.2 – Fully reuse all water that can be economically reused.

Policy 6.2.2.1 – The County should not object to efforts by water providers to increase their ability to sell or share reuse water supplies as long as non-renewable resources are not affected.

Section 6.3 - Regional Water Supply Plans

Goal 6.3.1 – Secure and deliver additional long-term water supplies.

- Policy 6.3.1.1 – Support the development of environmentally sensitive and safely designed surface water impoundments if these serve to enhance local water supply or service capability.
- Policy 6.3.1.2 – Work with water providers to identify regional opportunities and barriers.
- Policy 6.3.1.3 – Encourage water providers to pursue additional water storage opportunities, including surface storage as well as storage in both bedrock and alluvial aquifers.

Goal 6.3.2 – Identify opportunities for renewable water partnerships.

- Policy 6.3.2.1 – Support mutually beneficial arrangements among water providers and consumers to reduce cost and protect groundwater and the environment.
- Policy 6.3.2.2 – Encourage formal agreements among water districts to mitigate potential water supply shortages among individual suppliers.
- Policy 6.3.2.3 – Periodically review this Water Master Plan by convening a publicly accountable group, such as the El Paso County Water Master Plan Steering Committee, or arranging a collaborative review with the Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority.
- Policy 6.3.2.4 – Encourage the consolidation of regional water and sanitation systems over the proliferation of smaller, individual systems
- Policy 6.3.2.5 – Consider public-private partnerships to upsize utility infrastructure to meet potential growth demand.
- Policy 6.3.2.6 – Support collaborative coordination with water providers during the design and construction of water infrastructure and public roadways.
- Policy 6.3.2.7 – Water providers should pursue coordinating efforts to align regional water conservation, quality, and infrastructure goals

Section 6.4 - Renewable Water Development

Goal 6.4.1 – Promote diversified, sustainable water portfolios for new development, reducing their reliance on a single source of supply.

- Policy 6.4.1.1 – Promote “conjunctive use” of water, favoring use of renewable surface and alluvial supplies during wet and normal years balanced by using a greater share of nonrenewable Denver Basin supplies in dry years.
- Policy 6.4.1.2 – Consider allowing development of higher residential densities, which may be in excess of densities on surrounding land or in excess of densities envisioned in existing comprehensive plans, if such development will be served by water providers that have substantial and meaningful renewable water supplies.
- Policy 6.4.1.3 – Support efforts by water providers to obtain renewable water supplies through collaborative efforts and regionalization.
- Policy 6.4.1.4 – Promote long-term planning by water providers for sustainable water supplies serving new development.
- Policy 6.4.1.5 – Streamline the 1041 Regulations to favor projects related to delivery or development of renewable water in El Paso County.