



CITIZENS FOR DIXIE'S FUTURE
321 N. Mall Drive, Suite B-202, St. George, UT 84790

Water Sustainability Workshop

*A Comprehensive Approach to Achieving Water and Financial Sustainability in Washington County
October 30, 2014, 9:00 - 3:00 at Entrada*

Summary of the Workshop

The workshop was attended by 50 people, including local officials, business owners, landscaper designers, developers, homeowner association board members, and members of the public. It was led by Tom Ash, a recognized expert in Water Rates and Water Use Efficiency and an architect of the successful and highly touted Irvine Ranch Water District water budget rate structure. The workshop focused on how to design and implement water rates that satisfies water agency, water user and environmental needs.

The Irvine Ranch model is a budgeted water usage pricing system. It is used by a wide range of water agencies in California and has proven to achieve a high level of water use efficiency, revenue stability for water suppliers, a funding source for conservation programs, and a very high degree of water user (voter) satisfaction. It uses a concept of financially rewarding users for water use efficiency and penalizing them for water waste. A survey of the workshop attendees showed that 85% agreed that this concept is important for the efficient use of our most "vital" resource.

The model's basis is a billing structure that sets water usage budgets established for individual properties (homes, businesses, agriculture and institutions). These budgets are based on separate criteria for indoor and outdoor water need. For example, a single family home's indoor water budget is based number of residents and a target allocation of gallons per person per day; its outdoor budget is based on irrigatable area and the local weather (evapotranspiration rate of irrigated plants in the microclimate). Obtaining this data requires an initial investment in customer and land surveys, metering of indoor and outdoor water use, billing system software upgrades, and public education. Agencies have found that the investment to measure water use efficiency is quickly returned, and the system generates new funding for additional conservation programs paid only by those who waste water.

The challenges to implement a successful and more sustainable rate structure are (1) getting the policy makers on board with such a big conceptual change and (2) collecting accurate customer level data for both the budgeting and the billing. However, as Mr. Ash clearly showed from California's experiences, the time, the money and the ability to measure water efficiency is paying off for agencies in California, as one of the deepest and driest droughts has plagued the west for 3+ years with no end in sight.

Based on this very educational and on-target workshop, CDF hopes that a working relationship can be forged with the shareholders of Washington County's future to adopt successful water efficiency strategies, and that southern Utah can be a model for creating a more sustainable, environmentally sound use of limited water resources in our state.