

Water Conservation Work Plan 2026

Summary

Santa Fe's 10-Year Water Conservation Plan embraces a One Water approach — a way of thinking that treats all water as one interconnected system. From rain and rivers to groundwater, reuse, and return flows, every drop is part of the same cycle. By managing water as one resource, the City can make smarter decisions that benefit the environment, the community, and future generations.

Working within the new Conservation and Sustainability Division (CSD), the City will continue to promote efficient outdoor water use through rebates for EyeOnWater sign-ups, landscape transformations, and irrigation system upgrades. These efforts help preserve Santa Fe's unique landscapes and urban tree canopy while reducing overall demand for water.

The Water Resources Indicator (WRI) provides a data-driven framework for how the City responds to drought and water supply conditions and for communicating seasonal water conservation updates to the public. The WRI aligns with the City's Water Conservation Ordinance and helps determine when specific responses should be implemented each year. Using tools like Conserve Track and the Water Resources Dashboards, staff will track progress, measure program outcomes, and share results openly with the community.

This plan also supports larger City initiatives such as the San Juan Chama Return Flow Project and is designed to align with the goals of our current long range water resources planning effort known as Santa Fe Water 2100. Once complete, Santa Fe Water 2100 will include final water-supply modeling, evaluation of adaptation strategies, and the integration of community values to rank strategies. These will be incorporated into future updates of the City's Water Conservation plan.

Water Conservation and Growth

The City of Santa Fe uses a dual-track approach to growth management related to water demand:

- **Water Conservation:** reductions of overall water demand through a comprehensive series of water conservation measures and the efforts of citizens.
- **New Demand Offsets:** New development must balance the anticipated water use through conservation or the transfer of enough water rights to the City to serve an entire development at build-out.

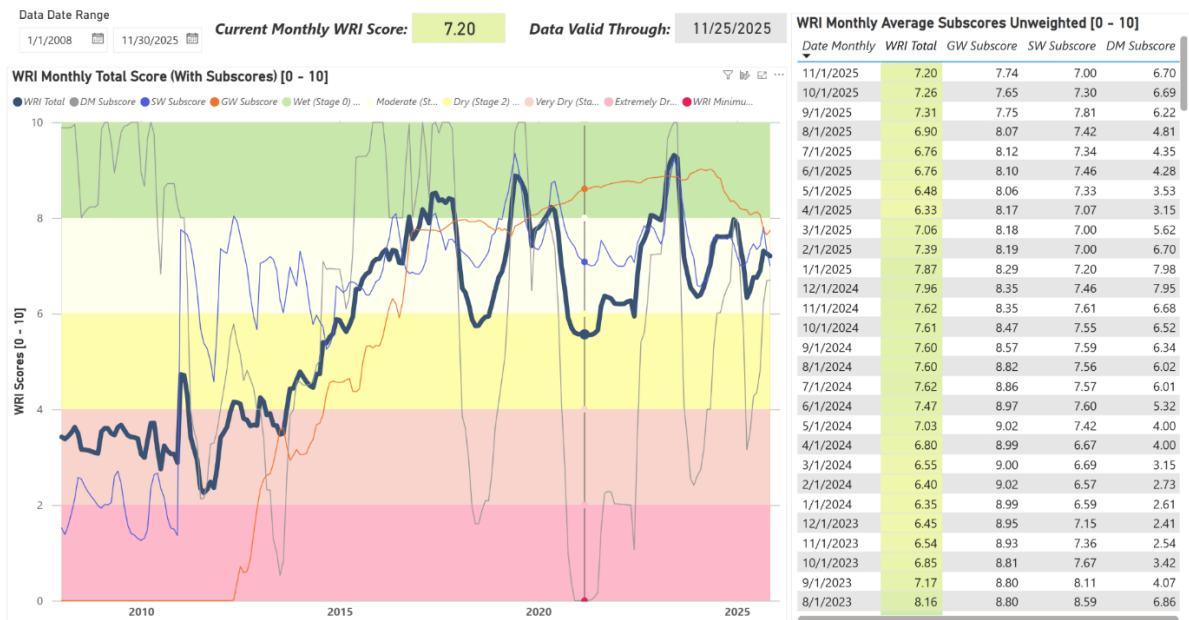
Presently, the City’s Planning & Land Use Department is updating the City of Santa Fe’s General Plan with the “Santa Fe Forward” project. Growth and water will continue to be important issues in Santa Fe, and any discussion of growth must consider impacts to the area’s water supply. Santa Fe’s 10-Year Water Conservation Plan and the Santa Fe Water 2100 plan, in progress, are addressing the alignment of growth and water. For more information please visit, <https://santafenm.gov/public-utilities/water>.

Water Resources Indicator (WRI)

The Water Resources Indicator (WRI) is the City’s tool for evaluating the reliability of current water supplies and tracking longer trends. While the score spans from “dry” (0) to “wet” (10), it reflects more than local climate or drought conditions.

By integrating surface water availability, regional drought data, and previous groundwater use, the WRI provides a combined assessment of both the current availability of City water supply, and the regional drought conditions in which the City is operating.

Each spring, the WRI score determines the City’s policy response stage – a set of coordinated, citywide actions designed to help Santa Fe adapt its water use to current conditions. These response stages guide how residents, businesses, and City operations adjust water use in accordance with the Water Conservation Ordinance.



WRI Response Stages:

Stage 0 – Wet Conditions (WRI 8–10)

Wet conditions apply, with baseline conservation measures including education, outreach, and serving water on request in restaurants.

Stage 1 –Normal (WRI 6–8)

Normal conditions encourages mindful watering, with irrigation limited to three days per week between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. from May 1 to October 31.

Stage 2 –Watch (WRI 4–6)

Outdoor watering is limited to two days per week between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. Residents are encouraged to check irrigation systems for leaks and postpone new landscaping.

Stage 3 –Warning (WRI 2–4)

Outdoor watering is limited to one day per week between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. Filling swimming pools and planting new cool-season grass are prohibited.

Stage 4 –Emergency (WRI 0–2)

Outdoor watering with potable water is prohibited, except for trees. All non-essential water uses such as car washing and new planting are suspended.

Water Conservation Program Scorecard

The Water Conservation Program Scorecard tracks and communicates progress toward the City’s long-term water-efficiency goals. Developed internally in coordination with the Water Conservation Committee (WCC), the Scorecard provides transparency and ensures measurable progress aligned with City priorities.

Each year, staff updates the Scorecard to evaluate accomplishments, identify areas for improvement, and adjust targets as new data becomes available. It aligns with broader City initiatives such as Santa Fe Water 2100 and the Sustainable Santa Fe 25-Year Plan.

The Scorecard will be updated annually, and more specific numeric goals will be added as new data sources become available — particularly following finalization of the Santa Fe Water 2100 plan.

Goal 1: Education, Outreach and Communication

2026 Goals	Description	Performance Indicators
Incorporate “One Water” concept into messaging and outreach efforts	Develop and implement campaigns showing how all water-rain, rivers, reuse and groundwater are all part of a connected system. Public messaging will be tied to WRI.	Create FAQ section on website Launch WRI dashboard by Q2 and update monthly during irrigation season
Expand K-12 Education program	Deliver a systems-based education program that emphasizes the One Water concept using Project WET curriculum, in partnership with the Santa Fe Watershed Association. The program will integrate principles of circular systems, climate resilience, community pride, and data stewardship.	Continue My Water, My Watershed for 5th-grade students. Conduct public education hikes focused on watershed awareness. Align lessons with SFPS curriculum benchmarks and Project WET standards. Expand bilingual education materials and activities.
Host the Next Generation Water Summit and related community education events	Serve on the organizing committee for the 7 th consecutive year, helping curate speakers and topics that highlight water conservation, sustainability, and climate resilience.	Sessions focused on water efficiency and sustainable landscapes Organize three community workshops on outdoor irrigation efficiency and proper plant and tree selection
Serve as a speaker, organizer, or	Participate in public and professional outreach opportunities—including	Attend or support at least 40 events in 2026

exhibitor at community and professional events	Earth Day, Arbor Day, Climate Masters, and Love Your Watershed Day—to promote water conservation, outdoor efficiency, and stewardship.	
Track all outreach with Conserve Track	Collect and track event attendance, participant demographics, staff time, costs, and materials distributed to measure community reach and program effectiveness	Use collected information to assess program reach, efficiency and return on investment

Goal 2: Customer Service and Incentives

2026 Goals	Description	Performance Indicator
Modernize Rebate Program	Streamline rebate program for indoor and outdoor rebates and new pilot rebates through Conserve Track	Increase number of rebates by 25% and increase return credits for affordable housing by 25%
Increase EyeOnWater engagement to increase household leak detection and real-time monitoring	Offer a \$20 incentive for EyeOnWater signups that include threshold alerts.	Increase number of EyeOnWater signups by 10%
Implement leak detection program for residents using Conserve Track	Log, track and resolve residential and commercial multi-family leak alerts with timely outreach, follow-up and resolution.	100% of detected leaks below established threshold receive outreach and follow-up with a 50% verified closure rate
Increase Enforcement	Use Conserve Track to manage all	Establish designated staff to

activities with Conserve Track	enforcement actions related to Water Conservation Ordinance	focus on enforcement Create baseline of enforcement program from data collected in 2026
Direct install programs and equity-based support	Working with third party to implement a direct install program for low-income multi-family complexes.	Complete 2 direct install projects
Complete a Commercial Baseline Study	Conduct a study of commercial water use patterns to identify conservation potential in this sector	Baseline completed by June 2026

Goal 3: Partnerships and Pilot Projects

2026 Goal	Description	Performance Indicators
Collaborate with City's River and Watershed Programs	Partner with the Parks and Open Space Division on the Storm to Shade Program, West Alameda Corridor, and public outreach and education related to MS4 permit requirements.	Participation in Storm to Shade and MS4 education events Focus group to look at quantification of stormwater rebates
Evaluate Irrigation Efficiency in City Parks	Analyze and evaluate irrigation system performance and water use in high-consumption parks to identify efficiency improvements and recommend targeted upgrades.	5 parks evaluated Irrigation upgrade recommendations Estimated gallons saved
Expand Water-Wise Partnerships with Tourism and Economic Development	Collaborate with hotels, restaurants, and short-term rentals to promote water-wise practices and recognition through the Water-Wise Business Program.	Advertise in two Tourism publications Collaborate with Economic Development on Go Local-Go Different campaign
Integrate with the City's Sustainability Plan	Align water conservation initiatives with the City's 25-Year Sustainability Plan to	Shared goals identified across plans

2026 Goal	Description	Performance Indicators
	promote coordinated resource management and climate adaptation.	
Support Keep Santa Fe Beautiful Partnerships	Support the Adopt-a-Median program and partner on Keep Santa Fe Beautiful grants to incorporate water-efficiency best practices in beautification projects.	<p>Number of medians or sites improved with water-efficient landscaping</p> <p>Volunteer participation tracked</p> <p>Annual summary of water-efficiency measures implemented</p>
Align with the Water Division and Santa Fe 2100 Plan	Coordinate conservation goals and program updates with the City's Santa Fe 2100 Plan and Water Division priorities.	<p>Shared datasets and indicators between divisions</p> <p>Collaboration in Santa Fe 2100 workshops</p> <p>Integration of conservation metrics in Santa Fe 2100 modeling</p>
Update Land Use and Landscape Standards	Collaborate with the Land Use Department on Chapter 14 updates and revisions to the Landscape Irrigation Design Standards (LIDS) document to advance water-efficient design.	<p>Chapter 14 and LIDS staff updates completed</p> <p>Adoption of revised standards by Governing Body</p>
Strengthen Santa Fe Community College Collaboration	Partner with Santa Fe Community College on community workshops, water-efficiency research, and workforce development programs for water and wastewater operators.	<p>Number of joint workshops or courses offered</p> <p>Student and participant attendance</p> <p>Research or pilot projects completed</p>
Coordinate with Santa Fe County	Align City and County planning initiatives with conservation programs and the Santa Fe 2100 Plan to	Joint projects or grant applications submitted

2026 Goal	Description	Performance Indicators
	ensure regional consistency and shared water-use goals.	Shared communication materials produced
Expand Regional Collaboration	Continue regional partnerships with the EPA, New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance, and Alliance for Water Efficiency to advance research and best practices.	Participation in regional pilot studies Published results or case studies Number of collaborative meetings or conferences attended
Strengthen the Water Conservation Committee's Advisory Role	Maintain full membership and engagement of the City's Water Conservation Committee to advise on policy, programs, and public outreach, ensuring alignment with community priorities and City goals.	Committee maintains full membership Approval of scorecard and formation of subcommittees to help support scorecard goals Recommendations incorporated into annual work plans

Goal 4: Effective Program Management

2026 Goals	Description	Performance Indicators
Utilize Technical Tools to Inform Conservation Targets	Apply tools such as EyeOnWater, Water Resources Indicator (WRI), Data Dashboards, STEWaRDS model, Conserve Track, and the Utility Billing System to inform program goals and track water-use trends.	Number of tools integrated into program management Metrics used to adjust or set conservation targets
Enhance Scorecard Tracking and Transparency	Incorporate cost-effectiveness metrics (e.g., dollars spent per gallon saved) into the Scorecard, and post initial, mid-year, and end-of-year updates to the SaveWaterSantaFe.com website.	Scorecard updates posted three times annually

		Percentage of programs with cost-per-gallon metrics Online engagement metrics (views/downloads)
Invest in Staff Development and Program Efficiency	Support staff performance and growth through annual performance reviews (PADPs), supervisor surveys, and professional training opportunities.	100% of staff receive annual PADPs Supervisor survey completion Number of staff trainings and certifications completed

Next Steps:

The City of Santa Fe will continue building on the commitments outlined in this plan through coordinated action, transparent reporting, and community partnerships. The Water Conservation Program will update the Scorecard each year to track progress toward measurable goals, share results with the public, and adjust priorities as new data and technologies become available.

As the City integrates the final Santa Fe 2100 plan, future updates will include refined conservation targets and expanded metrics to better capture community-wide progress.

The Conservation and Sustainability Division will also strengthen partnerships across City departments, schools, and community organizations to promote “One Water” thinking and ensure that every resident, business, and visitor can play a part in protecting Santa Fe’s water future. Collaboration includes close coordination with Santa Fe County on joint planning efforts. Aligning City and County initiatives supports shared conservation goals and long-range planning objectives, advancing the resilience and holistic vision of a One Water future.

By working together and measuring our success, Santa Fe will continue to lead as a model for water-wise, sustainable communities in the Southwest.