Colorado Springs Utilities
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Frequently Asked Questions
Extension of Water Service Ordinance

Why do we maintain surplus water supply?

City code requires us to have a surplus of water as a condition of annexing property into the city. This helps to ensure we can meet future anticipated needs of our growing city and allows us time to develop the additional water supplies that are needed to serve the area of new growth. Prior to 2023, the amount of that surplus was not specified.

Once annexed, the projected water demand of the annexation is included in our long-term planning (Sustainable Water Plan) so we can begin developing those future supplies. The ordinance no longer applies to the annexed land.

Why do we need to quantify the amount of surplus needed?

Half of our city's water is sourced from the Colorado River Basin, which is producing historically low flows due to on-going drought. All states that rely on the river's supply are adjusting to managing with less water and we must consider possible curtailment of our diversions and reduced exchange potential in the foreseeable future.

These, and other risks to our supply, are included in our planning models. A buffer between customer usage and available supply for approving annexations helps ensure we have adequate water to meet the long-term needs of our community.

Why was 128% of customer usage selected as the required buffer?

Many considerations go into our long-term water planning, including known risks to our system and responsible use of rate-payer money. Too much buffer requires expenditures that can't be supported by a large enough customer base, while too little puts us at risk for not being able to develop and deliver supplies at the same pace as growth. A buffer of about 30% above average customer use allows us to straddle these considerations. It ensures our water system performs consistently year to year and can serve projected future demands.

Following much discussion, City Council proposed and approved a buffer of 128% in February 2023.

Find the water ordinance and our Sustainable Water Plan at csu.org

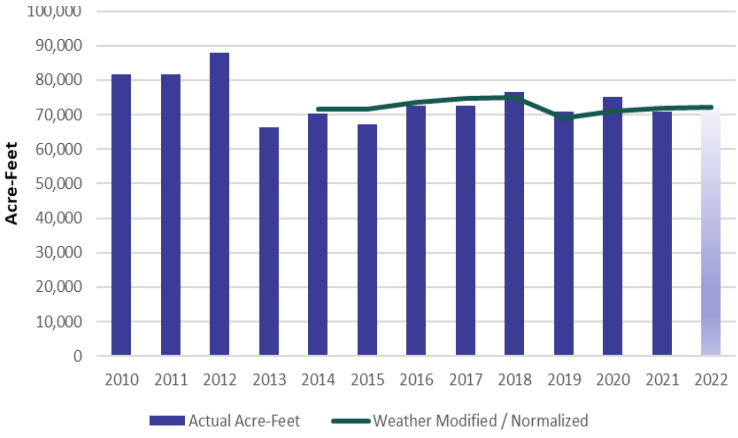
How do you determine water usage?

Water usage, though trending flat for Colorado Springs, can vary year to year depending on precipitation, temperatures, watering restrictions, and social and economic factors. We use a weather-normalized average of the most recent five years of customer water use to account for variance. Usage is updated annually.

As an example, potable water deliveries averaged about 71,200 acre-feet per year between 2017-2022. During that time, our per capita (per person) water use averaged 77 gallons per capita per day (GPCD) for single family residential and 133 GPCD systemwide, which includes business, industrial and agricultural use.

GPCD is a simple way of expressing demand and usage. Cities with more industrial users will have a higher GPCD versus cities like Colorado Springs with a high population and more residential demand.

Colorado Springs Utilities
CUSTOMER WATER USAGE 2010-2022



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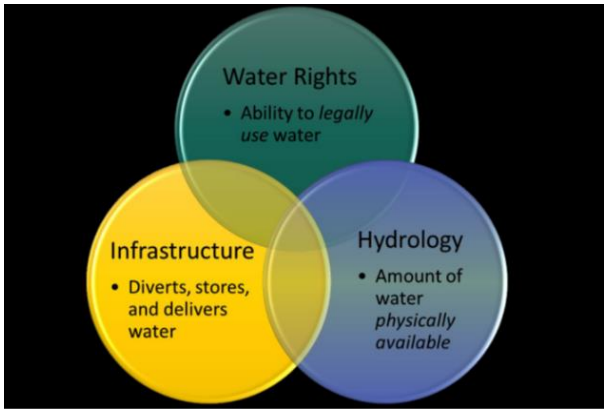
Frequently Asked Questions

Extension of Water Service Ordinance (cont.)

What is Reliably Met Demand?

We evaluate the performance of our water system by determining the maximum annual demand that can reliably be met while maintaining three Level of Service criteria through selected risks. This Reliably Met Demand, or RMD, is a way to express the complex interaction between hydrology, water rights and infrastructure that must all be in place to produce water yield to meet customer demands and mitigate risks.



How does storage help us manage risks to our water supply?

Springs Utilities has 25 reservoirs within its integrated raw water system. Storage serves as a savings account against variability (e.g. what Mother Nature provides) and other risks. Inflows to our water system can vary from a low of 50,000 acre-feet in the driest year to more than six times that amount in wet years. Storage allows water managers to collect water in those bumper years and draw from our storage reserves in drier times to meet customer demands.

It's important to remember that these reservoirs are located throughout our extensive system and not all the stored water is accessible nor easily delivered to terminal storage locations at all times. This is a factor we consider when determining Reliably Met Demand.

How can we maintain RMD?

Managing our water usage (consumption) and developing new supply will help us maintain this buffer and see us through risks to our Colorado River supplies.

- **Water conservation**

Water conservation and efficiency efforts help us manage our supplies wisely. Our conservation efforts since 2001 have already achieved a 41% reduction in per capita use. Following our city's water-wise rules, applying turf limits to new development and landscaping appropriately for our semi-arid climate, and installing water-efficient appliances and irrigation systems are smart practices that will help stretch our supplies.

- **Diversification of supplies**

Risks to our Colorado River supplies requires that we accelerate some programs and projects outside that basin that can provide more resiliency and flexibility in our system. These include our Arkansas River Water Sharing program and reuse options.

Visit csu.org to learn more.