

Water Conservation

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CCIM Institute
430 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 321-4460

Background

The United States as a Nation possesses abundant water resources and has developed and used those resources extensively. The future health and economic welfare of the Nation's population are dependent upon a continuing supply of fresh uncontaminated water. Many existing sources of water are being stressed by withdrawals to meet offstream needs (a water use that depends on the diversion or withdrawal of water from a surface- or ground-water source) along with increasing instream-flow requirements (a water use that occurs within the stream channel for such purposes as hydroelectric-power generation, navigation, recreation, etc.) to meet human and environmental needs.

Issue Analysis

According the United State Geological Survey (USGS), there was a general increase in water use from 1950 to 1980 and a general decrease in water use from 1980 to 1995. This decrease since 1980 can be attributed several factors, including the higher energy prices in the 1970s (causing a greater collective consciousness about conservation) and a transition from water-supply management to water-demand management encouraging more efficient use of water. The enhanced awareness of the general public to water resources and active conservation programs in many States has contributed to reduced water demands.

Commercial water use represents about 1 percent of total national water use, and includes water for motels, hotels, restaurants, office buildings, other commercial facilities, and civilian and military institutions. During 1995, commercial water use was an estimated 9,590 million gallons per day or 16 percent more than during 1990. According to the USGS, the large increase in commercial water use during that time had more to do with different sources of information, changes in how the estimates are calculated, and how fish hatcheries and military establishments are reported, rather than actual changes in water use. The most recent USGS report on water usage did not include commercial as a measured category.

Commercial, residential and industrial conservation and recycling have become increasingly common over the past 15 years. Severe droughts have been the greatest impetus for these efforts. Some water utilities offer payments, rebates and incentives for adopting conservation measures like retrofitting (low-flow faucet aerators, showerheads and toilets), landscape efficiency (Xeriscaping™), and reuse and recycling of "graywater", or treated wastewater for nonpotable (non-drinkable) water uses. Data suggests that these conservation efforts have made a significant impact on the amount of water resources used for commercial purposes.

CCIM Institute Position

The CCIM Institute supports the wise use and management of our nation's water resources so that residential, commercial, and industrial development can proceed unencumbered in the future. States' water rights and regional customs as they have developed over the years should be considered by all levels of government. We also recognize the importance of well-developed infrastructure in ensuring adequate water quality and quantity.

The CCIM Institute supports the continued voluntary usage of water conservation efforts such as retrofitting, landscape efficiency, reuse of graywater, education programs, water-use audits, pressure management, water accounting and loss control by commercial real estate where feasible. States and localities should have the authority and flexibility to

determine what types of these measures are most suitable for their state or location with the assistance of guidelines from federal government agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency.

The CCIM Institute supports state efforts and initiatives that encourage economic growth while promoting the sustainability of water resources. Regulations, requirements and penalties should be minimized in order to foster commercial growth due to commercial real estate's measurable and continued commitment to water conservation. The CCIM Institute understands that the quantity of water available has a direct impact on the quality of water for all uses. In addition, CCIM Institute supports the states in their efforts to maintain control over water use issues.

Case Study: New Jersey

In New Jersey, all outdoor sprinkler systems installed after September 8, 2000 are required to be equipped with automatic rain sensor devices. In July 2006, New Jersey State Senators Bob Smith and Henry McNamara introduced legislation that would go a step further, requiring all lawn sprinklers installed on commercial, retail, and industrial property prior to September 8, 2000 to be retrofitted with an automatic rain sensor.

To enforce this mandate, municipal certificates of occupancy, inspection or other documentary certification of compliance with laws and regulation relating to safety, healthfulness and upkeep would be withheld until the officer or agency responsible for its issuance has determined that rain sensors have been installed. In addition, closing of title on the sale of property would be contingent on both the buyer and seller certifying in writing that the required devices have been installed. Violators will be subject to a \$500 fine.

While the CCIM Institute supports the usage of water conservation efforts and technology, it believes that such usage should be voluntary, with minimal regulations, requirements and penalties, in order to foster commercial growth. CCIMs in New Jersey were asked to write their State Senator and ask them to balance the goal of water conservation with the vitality of the state's commercial real estate market.

Sources for Information on Water Conservation Policy

CCIM Institute Statement of Policy

http://www.ccim.com/members/govaffairs/pdf/master_SOP.pdf