



Setting Goals to Use Water Efficiently

Why set goals to use water efficiently?

Water system owners, managers, and operators work hard to provide safe and reliable drinking water to their customers. Using water efficiently helps you manage the growing demand for water. One of the most important steps in using water efficiently is setting water efficiency goals. Goals help you track your progress and determine the success of your water use efficiency (WUE) program.

We've heard some water systems ask questions like:

- "Why should we spend the time and money to use water more efficiently?"
- "Why do we need to worry about saving water, there's water all around us?" Usually they are referring to large water bodies such as the Columbia, Snake and Yakima rivers, Lake Washington, and Puget Sound.
- "We've never run out of water before, so why set a goal to use water efficiently?"

In answering these questions, we remind systems how important it is to look at the "big picture" of water efficiency. Consider the value of water not just as a source of revenue, but also for its aesthetic, recreational and environmental benefits, and the benefits to the health of the watershed in which you live. Our water supplies are not endless; demands on the state's water are increasing daily. Understanding that water is a finite resource that we simply cannot do without helps explain why we need to set goals for using water efficiently.

Don't wait until it's too late

The water use efficiency rule is a proactive approach to protecting public health, preserving our state's water resources, and ensuring the efficient use of water. Water systems are in a better position to provide sufficient water to their customers when they take action to reduce the amount of water taken from the resource. Water efficiency becomes even more important in the event of a drought, as climate changes become more evident, as the state's population grows, and as fewer water rights become available to water suppliers.

As you think about setting your goals, consider the water supply in your community and what challenges you may face in the future. Show your community your commitment to protecting the resource. Demonstrate good stewardship by establishing goals that use water in the most efficient way possible.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

Where to start

When getting ready to propose a goal, think about how your community can use water more efficiently without sacrificing cultural values. For example, if your community likes to garden, focus on how customers can change their gardening practices to use water more wisely. Consult your local nursery or county cooperative extension program to find materials and ideas you can use to educate your customers. Those water saving ideas can turn into a measurable water savings goal for the community. Here are some things to consider:

- Determine what types of cost-effective measures (such as water saving devices and education) will support the goal.
- Keep your customers informed of new water saving technology, such as soil moisture sensors or water efficient washing machines.
- Show how saving water can reduce other utility bills such as energy, gas, or wastewater.
- Identify a funding source for the measures you use to achieve the goal.
- Establish a timeline for achieving the goal.

Setting your goals

By law, you must establish at least one goal to help your customers use water efficiently. You must use a public process to do so.

Exploring what type of goals to set for your water system begins with stating a clear objective. We encourage you to adopt the most effective and water efficient goals possible. Every goal is specific to each water system. Your objective may involve different motivating factors such as water supply characteristics, infrastructure upgrade needs, social pressures, reducing outdoor water use, or the need to obtain additional connections to meet future demand.

You must evaluate and re-establish your goals every six years **and** any time you submit a water system planning document to the Department of Health for approval.

You have the flexibility to determine goals that makes sense for your customers and set as many goals you want.

How efficient can you be?

You might be asking yourself, “How good is good enough? Have I set a goal that the Department of Health will accept? Should I maintain the historic water use patterns of my community?” These are all questions you will need to consider. In many cases, you can find ways to reduce water use; it just takes some creativity to find those water savings.

If you end up establishing a goal to maintain a historic level (such as maintaining consumption at 65 gallons per person per day), you will need to explain to us why you are unable to reduce water use below that level.

The following are examples of acceptable goals:

- Reduce total production from wells by five percent within six years.
- Maintain daily consumption at 65 gallons per person per day for the next two years.

Before establishing your goal in a public meeting, please review the [Getting Started: Water Use Efficiency Guidebook](#), DOH 331-375, for more information.

Don't limit your choices

Many times, water systems only look at their average day demand or average use per person per day when setting goals. Consider establishing a goal that targets specific water users within your customer base. Reducing water use within the commercial or industrial class might be a good option for your goal if those customers use a large percentage of your system's water.

For example, you might establish a goal to "Reduce industrial customer water use from 40 to 30 percent of total water system production by the year 2014." You can achieve this by conducting water audits of your industrial customers, providing rebates, evaluating rates, and identifying how reducing water consumption can save them money.

What is the difference between setting goals and meeting the leakage standard?

In addition to setting a goal to reduce consumption by your customers, which you are required to do by law, we also encourage you to set a goal to reduce leakage within your water system. You are required to meet a leakage standard aimed at reducing leaks within your distribution system to no more than 10 percent, but this cannot be your only goal.

We realize that fixing your leaks may be your first priority and is one of the most cost-effective ways to use water efficiently. It's also a great way to show your customers how you are protecting this important resource and might even encourage behavioral changes in how they use water.

Use education to achieve your goal while installing meters and reducing leaks

We understand that you will need to spend money on reducing leaks and installing meters. For many systems, installing meters and fixing leaks will be a priority and we support those efforts to meet the deadlines.

You can achieve your customer goal without spending a lot of money. Many water systems will rely entirely on education and outreach to achieve their goal. EPA's WaterSense program is a great tool to help you meet your goal (see sidebar).

Educating your customers about using water efficiently is a requirement of the water use efficiency rule. It's also one of the easiest things you can do to encourage changes in how your community uses water. As long as you educate your customers once per year, you have met the education requirement.

If you want to educate your customers more than once per year, (which we recommend) you can count it as a measure in your WUE program. The more often you can remind your customers about using water efficiently, the more likely they are to change water use patterns and understand why it's important.

WaterSense can help!

WaterSense is a voluntary public-private partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Its mission is to promote the value of water and help you and your customers make smart decisions about water use and water-using products.

For more information, visit their website

<http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/>

or contact the WaterSense Helpline by email at watersense@epa.gov or call 866-WTR-SENS (987-7367)



One good point to make: It takes energy to heat water. Using water efficient devices and appliances (such as low-flow shower heads and water efficient washing machines) will save your customers money on their gas and electricity bills and provide a great incentive to lower their water use.

Consider these educational opportunities to reduce water use:

- Add water efficiency tips to your annual Consumer Confidence Report.
- Monthly newspaper advertisements.
- Quarterly newsletter, which could include seasonal water use efficiency ideas.
- Bill stuffers.

Focal points for education and outreach

Many water systems have created demonstration gardens that show how certain landscapes can save a lot of water. Consider starting a demonstration garden or pilot project within your own community to prove how implementing water saving measures will save water. A project like this would count as part of an education and outreach strategy to help achieve your goal.

Achieve the goal using demand-side (customer) measures

There is a difference between demand-side measures and supply-side measures. When you are setting goals for your customers, you must choose demand-side measures.

Demand-side measures reflect actions that affect how much water customers use, and include things such as education programs, rebates for high-efficiency toilets, rate structures based on the amount of water use, water bills that show consumption history, or a program that notifies customers they may have a leak on their property.

Choosing the right WUE measure(s) is critical to helping you achieve your goals. Choose measures that directly relate to your goals. If you are not achieving your goals, try implementing different measures.

Pilot project idea:

Select a homeowner that is willing to try out specific water savings measures within their home and compare that to historical water use patterns. Write up their story in your community newsletter to share with others. This will give you a good idea about how well the measure is working. It also gets your customers thinking about how to reduce their water use.

Achieve the leakage standard using supply-side measures

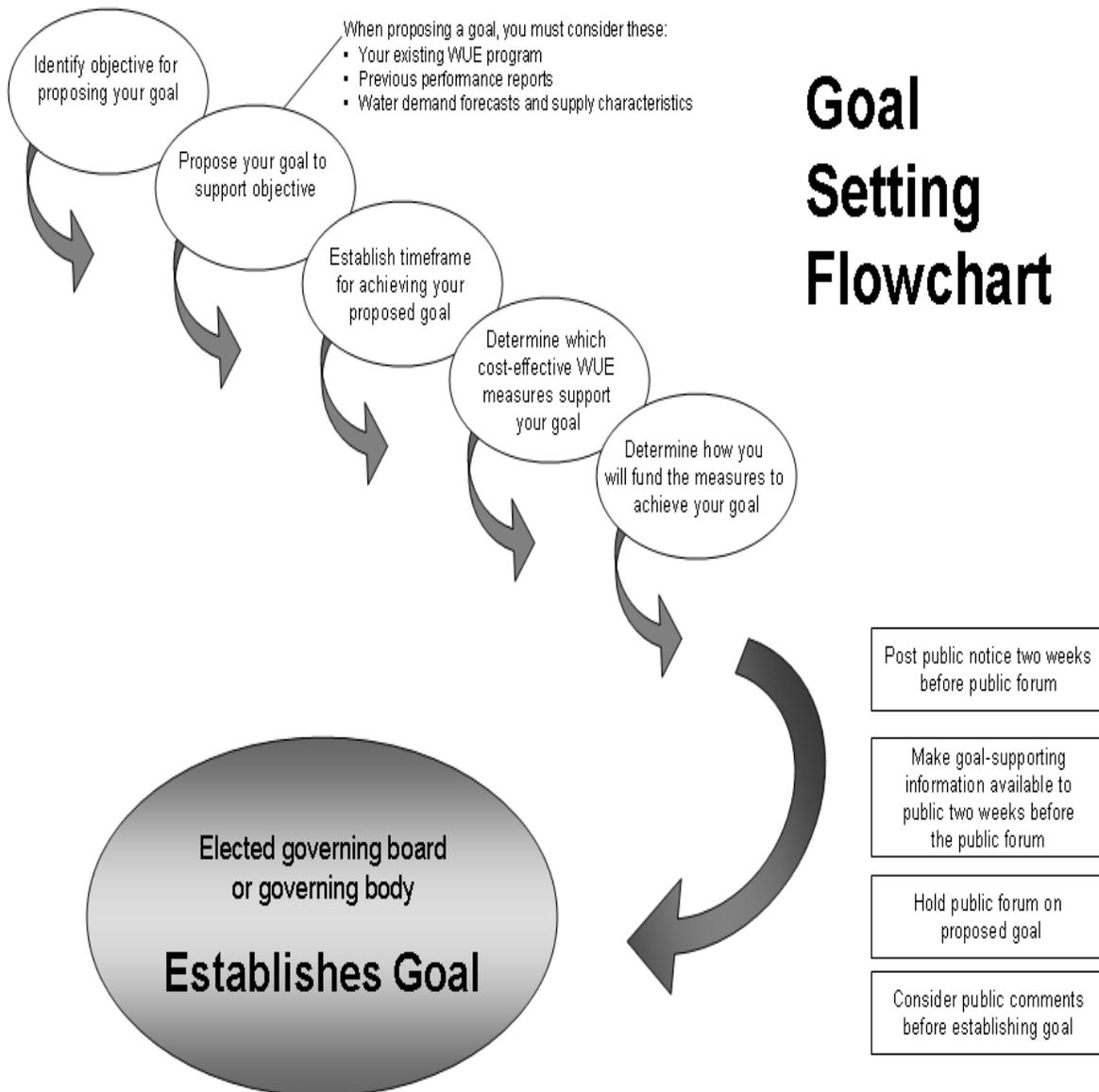
Supply-side measures show how efficiently the water system is operating, and generally include actions that will reduce leakage. They include things like meter replacement programs, source meter calibration, leak detection surveys, and water distribution system audits. You cannot use these types of measures to achieve a customer efficiency goal. These measures will not support a customer goal since they do not have a direct effect on whether customers use water more efficiently. Be careful not to select these with the assumption they will help meet the customer efficiency goal.

Setting goals in a public forum

You must engage your customers and interested members of the public when establishing your WUE goals. This meeting (forum) has many benefits. It gives your customers and the public a chance to affect decisions made by the governing body. It also helps consumers understand the need to use water more efficiently and teaches them how they can help you achieve your goals.

You should be prepared for any of the following three distinct groups to show up at your public meeting:

- Your water system's customers.
- Local community members.
- Special interest groups such as neighboring water systems, environmental organizations, tribal communities, and watershed planning units.



Public notice requirements

You must provide notice at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The notice must include the following information:

- Purpose of the meeting.
- Date, time, and location for the meeting.
- Where your audience can find additional information supporting your proposed goal.

Use ODW's Website to provide public notice

Our [water use efficiency](#) website now has a feature that allows you to announce your goal-setting meeting and meets the public notice requirements. You can start the process by using this link on our website: [How to post your goal-setting public forum to our website](#)

Who can help

Seek out vendors and local conservation groups to find water efficiency products and services. The WaterSense website is a great resource to find products, services, manufacturers, retailers, distributors, and water efficient landscape professionals. Also available to help are the following organizations:

The Partnership for Water Conservation
<http://www.partners4water.org/>
206-957-2199

Evergreen Rural Water of Washington
<http://www.erwow.org/>
800-272-5981

Don't forget to ask your neighboring water systems about their water use efficiency programs when looking for ideas. Often they have the same questions you do, and together you may be able to form a local partnership for using water efficiently.

For more information

This and other publications are available at
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater.aspx>

[Mike Dexel](#), Water Resources Policy Lead, 360-236-3154
Northwest Region – Kent 253-395-6750
Southwest Region – Tumwater 360-236-3030
Eastern Region – Spokane Valley 509-329-2100



If you need this publication in an alternate format, call 800-525-0127. For TTY/TDD, call 800-833-6388.