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Tucson Water Begins Recycled Water Program

Tucson Water has completed a master plan for the development of recycled water as a future drinking water resource. Additional planning and study will begin soon, including discussions with Tucson Water customers.

“We’ve been studying this for some time,” said Tucson Water Director Alan Forrest. “The ongoing drought and dropping water levels in Lake Mead, and planning for the impacts of climate change are making it a higher priority than originally planned.”

However, Forrest added, the development of this renewable resource will take a number of years. Tucson Water customers will have opportunities to learn more and provide input on the program, he said.

“The City of Tucson leadership has always supported Tucson Water in planning far in advance to make sure we have a safe, reliable water supply for the future,” Forrest pointed out. For example, planning for the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal, which today provides most of Tucson’s water, began in the 1960s. Tucson Water’s comprehensive Long-Range Water Plan, most recently updated in 2012, looks ahead to water issues we are facing today and in coming years, Forrest said. The Long-Range Water Plan can be found on the utility’s web site at www.tucsonaz.gov/water.

Interim Tucson Water Deputy Director and Program Manager, Jeff Biggs said “The purification technology is available to ensure safe drinking water. We also have the means to recharge our aquifer and benefit from natural treatment as part of the purification process.”

Biggs pointed out that water recycling is happening worldwide as a sustainable practice with locally-controlled, renewable water supplies. This is especially true in the arid Southwest.

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Tucson Water has three decades of experience with the reclaimed water system using that water for irrigation of parks, school yards, golf courses, and some neighborhoods.

“This Program will build on that thirty years of success, applying advanced technology, recharge, and blending with other water supplies to secure a high-quality and renewable water resource,” said Biggs.

The Recycled Water Master Plan was peer-reviewed by a group of nationally and internationally respected experts organized by National Water Research Institute (NWRI), a non-profit group dedicated to water supply and water quality research. The group that assisted Tucson Water was chaired by Dr. Shane Snyder from The University of Arizona.

More information about recycled water and this program is available on Tucson Water’s web site at www.tucsonaz.gov/water.

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