



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 15, 2015

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Alan D. Forrest, P.E.
Director
Tucson Water Department

SUBJECT: Update on the Expansion of the Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program

As requested at the November 5th, 2014 Study Session, Tucson Water staff have prepared an update on efforts to expand the Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program. Expansions and program changes are planned to take effect July 1, 2015. As a result of discussions that have taken place on this topic, Tucson Water is recommending that a complete program evaluation be conducted at the end of calendar year 2017. This departure from the standard 3-year period, used to assess impact on water use, is designed to allow for a more complete evaluation of the additional benefits attributed to rainwater harvesting practices.

You will find details of each of the particular expansion points discussed in detail. If you have any questions about the findings or progress of these expansion options, please contact Fernando Molina, Public Information Officer, or Daniel Ransom, Conservation Program Manager, at 791-4331.

1) Expand the water harvesting rebate to all customers with a 3/4 inch or smaller meter which will include small commercial and multi-family customers

Need: Provide clarity to the applicants for what does and does not qualify while allowing for a simple process to apply for a rebate.

Progress: Brochures, applications, workshop criteria, and website will be updated to define “small commercial and “multi-family” customers with a 5/8” or 3/4” meter. Workshop attendance for small commercial and multi-housing owners will continue as a requirement for participation in the rebate program. Customers can identify their meter size by calling the Public Information Conservation Office (PICO) or by comparing the service charge on the second page of their water bill to this table: <http://water.tucsonaz.gov/water/potable-rates>. Itemized water volume charges are \$11.00 for 5/8” meters and \$14.64 for 3/4” meters.

2) Include curb cuts into the rebate program

Need: Identify process for permitting curb cuts to comply with jurisdictional regulations.

Progress: Brochures, applications, workshop criteria, and website will be updated to include information for installing and permitting curb cuts. Johanna Hernandez contacted Ellen Alster (Landscape Architect) with Pima County Department of Transportation (DOT) which does not

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allow curb cuts and does not have a permitting policy for existing roadways. However, the County incorporates curb cuts and storm water management into new development. The Tucson Water staff recommendation is to pilot curb cuts in the City of Tucson jurisdiction where permitting, standard details, and specifications are already in place.

A meeting was held with Gary Wittwer, Tucson DOT Landscape Architect, on January 6th to discuss the permitting process for curb cuts and cores within the City of Tucson jurisdiction. In attendance: Fernando Molina (TW), Daniel Ransom (TW), Candice Rupprecht (TW), Andrew Greenhill (TW), Gary Wittwer (TDOT).

Discussion included:

- Providing materials and weblinks about curb cuts, curb cores and right-of-way (ROW) work from TDOT on Tucson Water's website
- Maintaining the same permit process established by TDOT; TW will direct questions to Gary Wittwer
- Issuing RWH rebates after final inspection on curb cut/curb core has been completed, thereby ensuring that more final inspections are actually completed and cleared from the TDOT log of open projects
- Maintaining TW policy that RWH rebates are issued to individual customers and therefore neighborhood associations planning ROW work must coordinate efforts

3) Enhance and streamline the current rebate program incorporating the feedback provided by participants like standardizing the curriculum for the workshop

Additional information was provided in a memo from Ward 1 sent to Amy McCoy, Chair of CWAC C&E Subcommittee on November 17th, 2014.

- 1) Create a uniform curriculum for all rebate workshops
- 2) Create a uniform web-site or link for all organizations that teach rebate workshops
- 3) Create uniform feedback and tracking for all rebate participants
- 4) Perform outreach with all permit reviewers dealing with curb cuts
- 5) Work with organizations that have a proven track record of working with low-income communities to improve outreach and utilization of the program in those communities

Need: Compile existing workshop feedback, review survey conducted by ward offices and gather input from stakeholders about perceived need(s) for workshop improvements.

Progress: The first meeting to discuss improvements and standardizing water harvesting rebate workshops was held December 18th, 2014. In attendance: Katie Bolger (Ward 2), Steve Arnquist (Ward 1), Tamara Prime (Ward 3), Daniel Ransom (TW), Charlie Ware (SARG), Mark Lewis (CWAC C&E), Catlow Shipek (WMG), Lincoln Perino (SmartScape), Brad Lancaster (Consultant), and not in attendance Amy Stabler (Ward 6). The next meeting is scheduled January 28th, 2015, at Ward 1 Office.

Discussion included:

- Developing a power-point template baseline to standardize workshop presentations for all rebate workshops including Spanish translations
- Developing a tracking system for water saving, monetary savings, and additional benefits
- Set up semi-annual meetings to update instructors on evolving techniques
- Develop web videos (English and Spanish) for refreshers as part of uniform online curriculum
- Develop best management practices for all workshop presentations
- Create website uniformity between all workshop providers
- Uniform follow-up with participants such as surveys and data collection

4) Work with entities that work with low-income communities to improve low-income outreach program

Need: Understand effectiveness of existing low-income services and identify opportunities for expansion of these services.

Progress: Tucson Water has partnered with SERI (Sonora Environmental Research Institute) on a pilot project to provide training and install rain water harvesting systems at low-income homes. Requirements for the program are that participants must be low-income, have trees from Trees for Tucson or other authorized suppliers, and take both a tree care and rainwater harvesting workshop. Claudio Rodriguez from the Community Food Bank has been assisting with the workshops, which are offered in Spanish. Funding for the pilot program includes \$20,000 from a grant acquired by SERI and \$20,000 matching from Tucson Water.

SERI staff and volunteers attended a workshop with Ethos Rainwater Harvesting to learn how to install earthworks. Using SERI staff and volunteers to design and install passive rainwater harvesting systems at low-income households will reduce the cost by not having to hire contractors. Additionally, changes to designs and practices are being considered in an effort to reduce costs. The pilot project with SERI will be completed in Spring 2015, allowing for additional information to be reviewed to assist with program development.

Tucson Water is having discussions with the Community Food Bank to offer gray water and rainwater harvesting workshops in Spanish that would qualify for the rebate programs. Locations of the workshops would be offered in low-income neighborhoods.

Community Home Repair Projects of Arizona (CHRP) works with low-income families installing HETs for Tucson Water's low-income program and is willing to help with outreach for rainwater harvesting.

5) Discussion with the members of the flood control district

Need: Understand impacts of the expanded rainwater harvesting program on agencies that manage storm water within the Tucson Water service area.

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Progress: Staff met with Pima County Flood Control on December 17th, 2014 to discuss coordination between the Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) and Tucson Water on efforts with the rainwater harvesting program. RFCD has undertaken some studies to analyze impacts on stormwater runoff resulting from urbanization, and they also expressed interest in establishing a network of sites to monitor rainfall and water use from RWH systems. In attendance: Fernando Molina (TW), Daniel Ransom (TW), Evan Canfield (County), Lynn Orchard (County), Eric Shepp (County Floodplain Administrator), and Irene Ogata (OIP).

Tucson Water will continue to evaluate the RWH program based on reduction in demand. However, staff met with the Office of Integrated Planning (OIP) December 1, to discuss the additional benefits of rainwater harvesting and OIP's potential role in analyzing their impacts. Tucson Water will develop projects to collect data to assess benefits of rainwater harvesting, including stormwater runoff and increased tree canopy. In attendance; Katie Bolger, (ward 2), Steve Arnquist (ward 2), Leslie Ethen (OIP), James MacAdam (OIP), Irene Ogata (OIP), Tamara Prime (ward 3), Fernando Molina (TW), and Daniel Ransom (TW).