

## **Recommendations for Ensuring Long-term Water Supply for Raleigh and Towns in Eastern Wake County**

Ensuring adequate and clean drinking water is vital to our community. As Wake County's population doubles to a projected 1.5 million by 2025, water supply may not be sufficient if current use and climate patterns continue. Future water supply plans for Raleigh's Public Utility system\*, while increasing supply capacity, could fall short of needs, especially during times of drought. Planning for the future, balancing growth with water limits and implementing stronger water conservation measures are critical. Future water supply should be paid for in a way that is fair to current taxpayers. Strong and cooperative leadership at the city and county levels is needed to keep our water flowing.

**WakeUP Wake County recommends creating a city Water Stewardship Advisory Board consisting of independent experts in water resource management. This stewardship board would report to City Council and should:**

- **Re-assess water capacity using historical drought as a benchmark**
- **Recommend long-term conservation measures**
- **Promote transparency in water planning and funding**
- **Evaluate water and sewer fees for fairness to the public**

### **I. PLANNING FOR GROWTH:**

**Review fees on new connections for water and wastewater and charge fees in line with actual costs.** A water and wastewater connection fee should help cover the costs for future water facilities. How much are *current* citizens paying for *future* water and wastewater needs in their bills? The public utility should make this information transparent, study the "impact" of new buildings, and charge fees according to volume of water demand. New growth and development should pay for itself and not unfairly burden existing residents. Expanding water and wastewater treatment to meet the demand of a growing population in Wake will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Enact Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) and Assess Water Capacity.** An APFO would allow new construction only when water facilities are sufficient for additional growth. Using the drought of record as a benchmark, local water providers should re-assess: 1.) current and future water reservoir capacity and wastewater treatment capacity, and 2.) how year-round water conservation measures could extend water supply. Providing water to existing residents should be the priority.

**Comprehensive development plans should include a focus on preserving and protecting water resources and on water conservation.** Future growth should be required to incorporate low impact development (LID) principles, including rainwater harvesting (cisterns, rain barrels), water reuse, and water-wise landscaping (native, drought-resistant). New growth should be directed towards transit corridors and discouraged in water supply watersheds such as Falls Lake and Little River. The city's comprehensive plan and capital improvement budget for all departments (especially public utilities) should be linked.

**Make actions transparent and utilize updated information.** Public utility water and sewer actions should be very transparent to the public. Long-term planning should include critical stakeholders and use best possible growth and demand projections.

**Study integrated, regional water resources planning.** Consider all of the water resources and their interrelationships in the Triangle region. Recognize limits to supply and effects of hydrologic changes (e.g., land use and a warmer climate with more intense storms and more severe droughts) on our water resources.

**Better protect our water supply watershed areas.** Continue and expand Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative to reduce sedimentation and pollution in Falls Lake. Review and improve water supply watershed rules, particularly to incorporate new practices and technology to reduce stormwater pollution.

**Inventory and prioritize the area's water resources.** Some surface water resources might have greater community value for ecosystem benefits than as a water source. Currently, our water resources management considers only potable supply and demand. We must begin to put a value on ecosystem and other intrinsic values of our natural water resources.

## II. WATER CONSERVATION:

**Use tiered rates to encourage conservation.** Tiered rates, which Cary and Orange County already use, would encourage conservation by increasing rates as usage increases. Adopt a single rate structure that would apply to all municipalities in the utility system, and perhaps a different rate structure for residential and commercial. Provide technical and financial assistance to help customers increase water efficiency. Change Raleigh Public Utilities business model from selling gallons of water to selling water services, including efficiency.

**Provide financial incentives (e.g., rebates and “conservation credits”) to private consumers and builders. Amend building codes to ensure conservation.** Financial incentives should be available from the municipalities for water-saving devices, including toilet fixtures, showerheads, washing machines, cisterns, water-wise landscaping, etc. Conservation credits could be used to encourage cisterns and other measures. Also, building codes could be amended to require greater water efficiency in new construction.

**Require split metering (separate meters for all irrigation systems).** New buildings should have split water meters installed, and a higher rate for irrigation water should be charged.

**Develop more informative monthly billing.** More information would increase customers' awareness of their water use. Clearly show water use in gallons, and the tier that would apply if you use more water. Provide data on customers' past year's use and current use. Give guidelines on what is “efficient level of use” for various households.

*\*Raleigh's Public Utility system supplies water to the following municipalities in Wake County: Garner, Knightdale, Rolesville, Raleigh, Wake Forest, Wendell and Zebulon.*

For further information, contact: [info@wakeupwakecounty.com](mailto:info@wakeupwakecounty.com), 828-3833