

Water Conservation in 2021

SUMMARY

If you have been following the news, you have probably heard that Governor Cox has declared a state of drought emergency in Utah. While he sets the tone for state decisions and facilities, each municipality navigates water conservation in a way that suits their own needs and availability. Sandy established our Smart Water management and conservation culture many years ago and will continue with enhanced conservation and education measures. It seems unlikely that we will need to shift to emergency level restrictions this year, but we need to conserve water, so we continue to have water stored in the event of future years of ongoing drought.

BACKGROUND

The Governor has declared a state of drought emergency and water agencies statewide are ramping up efforts to educate Utahns about water conservation and smart water use. While Sandy has long had smart water practices in place, we are joining efforts to remind the public to treat water as the precious resource that it is. Sandy has an adequate supply of water this year. However, we must remember the water currently available reflects an average of the past several years of water availability. In 2021, so far, Sandy's snowpack and stream runoff are close to record lows and Little Cottonwood Creek, Bell Canyon, and the Provo River are only at approximately 30-40% of their normal water levels. At this point, it is certain that we will be withdrawing from our water reserves rather than expanding them this year. This is not a problem in the short term, but if this turns out to be the beginning of a multi-year drought, we will deplete our water reserves. While Sandy can withstand a one-year drought, we must acknowledge that the multi-year droughts that many of our neighboring states have encountered over the past fifty years are possible in Utah, as well. If this year's drought extends into the future, the entire state will likely encounter increased water prices and more drastic water conservation measures. Our goal in Sandy is to continue education and conservation efforts now, so our residents and business owners are already water wise before drought measures grow more extreme. Please remember, water is life; we all need this precious resource, and we all need to work together to conserve water where we can.

SANDY'S SMART WATER MANAGEMENT

The Sandy parks department is both one of the city's biggest water users and one of our best examples of water conservation practices. Over the past five years the parks department has taken many extra steps to reduce their water usage by nearly 20%. Here is a summary of some of their most water-efficient measures; these same resources are also available to all Sandy residents, schools, businesses, and churches:

- **Sign up for FREE smartphone text and/or email alerts with Sandy's Water Watch.** Every Sandy water customer has a smart meter connection to the city's water system. Sandy parks uses the city's smart meter Water Watch software to track water use and send text alerts if water use exceeds conservation goals for each park. Register your Smart Meter to save water and money this summer: sandy.utah.gov/waterwatch
- **Schedule a FREE Water Check.** The Park's staff inspect, audit, and maintain/fix inefficiencies (sprinklers, pipe leaks, adjust run times) in our parks. Residents can get a free water audit and watering recommendations from USU Extension. Information on a self-audit and a link to sign up for a free USU professional audit can be found here: <https://sandy.utah.gov/1568/Water-Audit>
- **Smart Irrigation Controller FREE Rebates.** Smart controllers in Sandy's Parks reduce water use 10-40% by automatically adjusting watering schedules around wind or precipitation. Residents, businesses, and schools can get their own smart irrigation controllers and a \$75 rebate while they last at: www.Utahwatersavers.org
- **Help us Fix Water Waste – Use the CityServe App.** *See something? Say something!* If you see a leak on city property, you may have found it before we have. Please use the [CityServe app](#) to report watering issues in the city or give us a call to give us a heads up.

DROUGHT RESPONSE ACTIONS

During a drought, little changes make a big difference. Here are actions you can take to do your part:

- **Water less, but don't entirely stop watering.** – If you water at least one less time per week, you can save an estimated 3,000 gallons of water for a quarter-acre yard. Grass is resilient and can survive with only 1-inch of water a month. Although your lawn may not stay green with less water, it can enter dormancy during times of drought and high temperatures and recover when conditions improve. The Division of Water Resources has created a [Weekly Lawn Watering Guide](#) to simplify data into how many days per week to water based on conditions in your county. For more information about lawn dormancy go to: <https://cwel.usu.edu/research/is-your-lawn-dead-or-dormant/>
- **Don't water if it's windy.** – If the wind speed is above 5 mph, most of the water will blow where it's not needed and/or evaporate. Turn your sprinklers off on windy days, or get a smart controller that automatically delays watering cycles on windy days. For more outdoor watering tips go to: <https://slowtheflow.org/outdoor-tips/more-tips/>
- **Water at the right time.** – Sandy City has a Time-of-Day Watering Ordinance that prohibits watering between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. to reduce evaporative loss. You can read more about the ordinance [here](#) (go to Section 8-3-2).
- **Prioritize your watering.** –
 - #1 - Trees
 - # 2 - Shrubs
 - # 3 - Perennials
 - # 4 - Annuals
 - # 5 - Grass

For more information on prioritizing your irrigation go here:

<https://www.usu.edu/today/story/ask-an-expert---how-to-prioritize-home-irrigation-during-a-drought>

- **Raise your mower.** – Set your blades at 3-4 inches. Taller grass means deeper roots that can access water that is deeper in the soil. Tall grass also shades roots and soil to reduce evaporation loss. For more information on basic turfgrass care, go here: <https://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/research/basic-turfgrass-care>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Water Wise Demonstration Gardens:** Looking for ideas and inspiration? Consider visiting Sandy City's own [Sego Lily Garden](#) at 1472 E Sego Lily Drive (10200 South), open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Sandy residents can also visit the regional [Conservation Garden Park](#) at 8275 South 1300 West and online. These resources feature water wise plants, turf samples, landscaping ideas, as well as various water wise irrigation options. At these demonstration gardens, residents can take self-guided tours, pick up educational materials, and get advice from on-site conservation experts.
- **Virtual Resources:** For more water conservation information, visit [Sandy City's website](#); it is a treasure trove of water conservation resources. Find information about native and water wise plants, local demonstration gardens, water conservation tips for both inside and outside your home, landscaping ideas aimed at reducing water consumption, rebates for smart controllers and low-flow toilets, scheduling a water audit, running your own water audit, and more.
- **Landscaping Ordinances:** If you or someone you know in Sandy decides to move ahead with landscaping changes this year and are concerned about the code, you can read about Sandy's landscaping ordinances here [go to Section 19-2-1]: https://library.municode.com/ut/sandy/codes/city_code

If you need assistance, please contact our Water Education and Outreach Coordinator at (801) 568-7187. Our staff can assist you with getting signed up for Water Watch or helping to connect you with other resources. We are also amid updating our Water Conservation Plan, which will guide our future efforts. This project will include Council briefings and opportunities for input from Council and the public during the latter half of 2021.