Utah's Water Future

Local Perspectives on Water Issues

Highlights from the 2014 iUTAH Household Survey

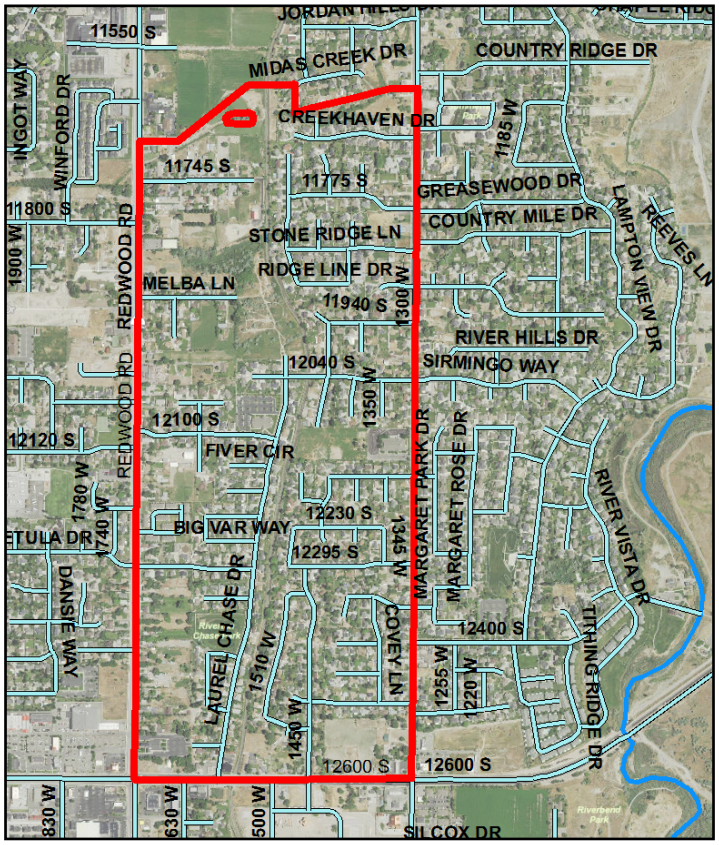
RIVERTON HIGHLIGHTS

Background:

In July and August 2014, researchers from Utah State University and the University of Utah conducted a survey about water issues with residents in one neighborhood in Riverton. We received responses from 61% of the Riverton households selected to participate (107 total respondents).

Characteristics of survey respondents were very similar to the neighborhood and city as a whole based on Census information, though adults responding to the survey somewhat underrepresented those in the 18-35 age group and overrepresented those over age 65.

Map of Study Neighborhood In Riverton



Household Water & Lawns

People know how much they spend, but not how much they use

- Over three-fourths of respondents (76%) reported a high degree of familiarity with how much they spend on water each month, but fewer (31%) were familiar with the volume of water they use.

Lawns are watered by household residents

- Riverton respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they water their own lawns (96%). Just 4% say watering is done by a landlord or HOA.

Few water during the day

- Most residents (99%) reported watering their lawn mainly in the morning, evening, or at night.
- The average household watered the lawn 4 times per week in July.

Weather plays a key factor in watering decisions...

- Nearly all of households (85%) said they try to adjust their lawn watering to the weather.

...but property value, time, and conservation are also considerations.

- Most indicated they water to try to maintain property value (79%) and prevent brown spots (67%).
- Majorities said keeping a regular schedule (74%) and minimizing time spent watering (51%) were important considerations.
- Just over half (54%) said conserving water was an important factor in their lawn watering decisions.

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Water Conservation

Many residents think that they can do more to conserve water…

- Less than half (43%) of Riverton respondents felt they could do more to reduce their indoor water use (lower than other study neighborhoods), while
- About a third (34%) thought they could do more to reduce outdoor water use.

…but only a small percentage report have actually decreased their water use

- A small minority of Riverton respondents reported that they decreased either indoor (27%) or outdoor (12%) water use over the last five years.

People were most willing to conserve water if it:

- **Ensures future supply for their home** (76%),
- **Improves fish & wildlife habitat** (66%),
- **Ensures future supply for farms** (64%), and
- **Reduces their water bills** (62%),

People were least willing to conserve if savings are used to increase development in this area (18%).

Secondary Water Systems

Used by over 90% of households, mainly for lawns and gardens

- About 91% of Riverton respondents reported having access to secondary water for irrigation, of which 89% have a pressurized system and 11% receive water from an open ditch or canal.
- Those with access mainly used secondary water for irrigating their lawn and other landscaping (98%) or for vegetable gardens (47%). Very few used this water for agricultural crops or livestock (4%).

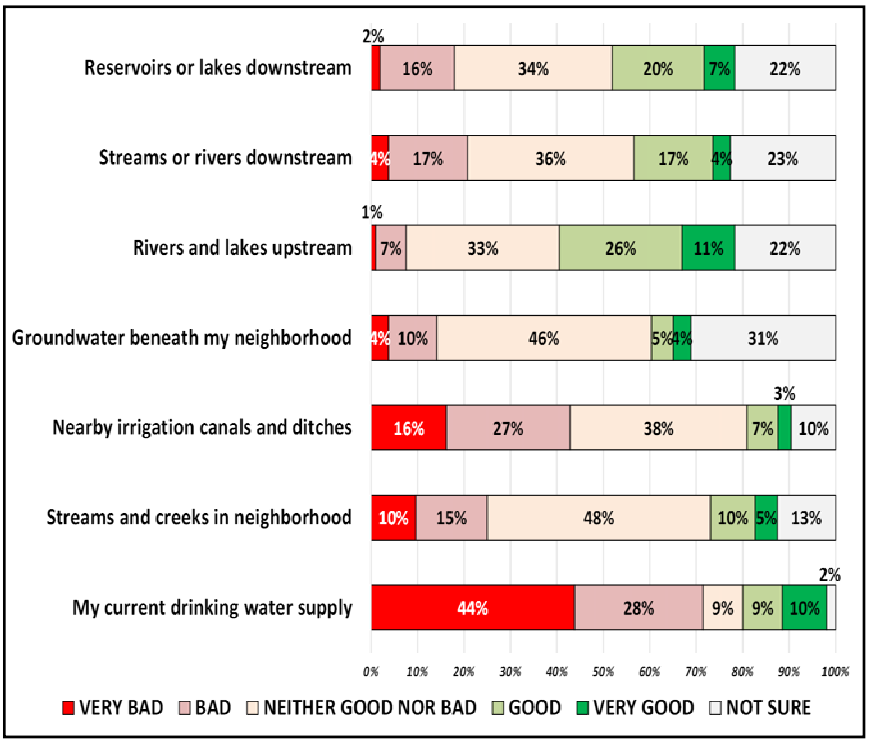
Most users are satisfied

- Respondents from Riverton who have secondary water service were generally satisfied with their systems (55%) and 12% said they have attended a meeting with their secondary water provider.
- Less than a third of Riverton respondents with secondary water (29%) indicated confidence in the future security of their secondary water supply.

Water Quality

Local drinking water quality is generally not seen as good.

- Unlike most other study areas, most (72%) Riverton respondents rated their drinking water quality as "bad" or "very bad", and only 18% rated it as "good" or "very good".
- By contrast 38% rated water in rivers and lakes upstream as good/very good, with 8% rating it as bad/very bad.
- A minority of respondents (10%) indicated nearby irrigation canal or ditch water was of good quality, compared to 21-27% who felt downstream waters in rivers and lakes were good quality .
- Many were ambivalent; between 33-48% of Riverton residents rated different types of water as neither good nor bad.



Concerns about Water and Other Issues

Respondents believed current water supplies are more adequate than future water supplies

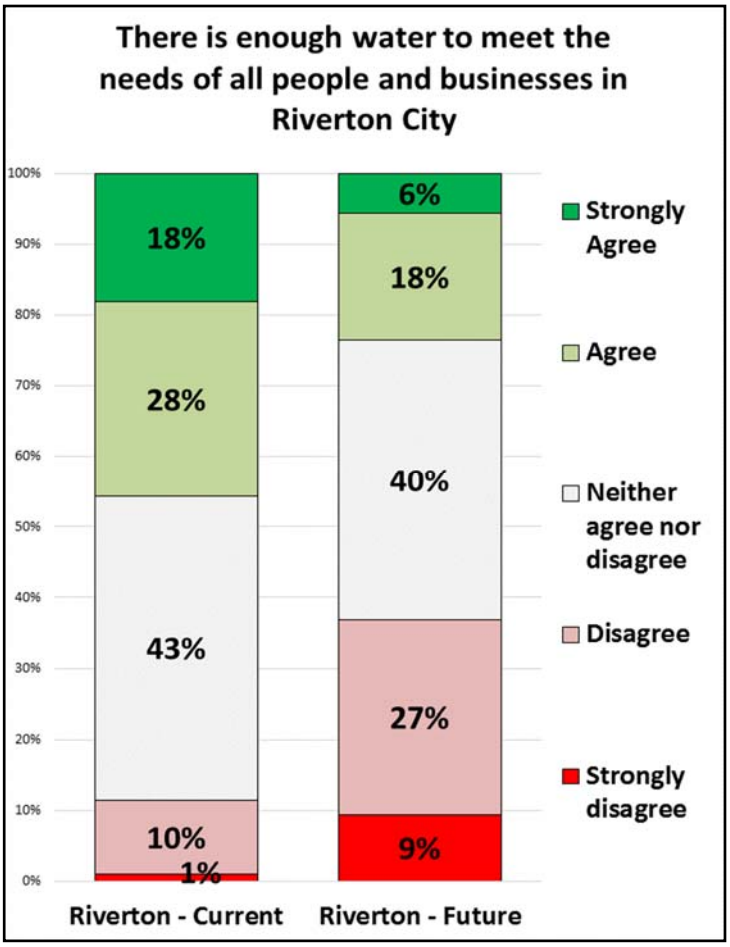
- Just under half of Riverton respondents (46%) thought there was enough water to meet current needs in the city; 11% disagreed.
- Only 24% were confident in Riverton's future supply, and 36% of respondents were concerned about the city's future water supply.

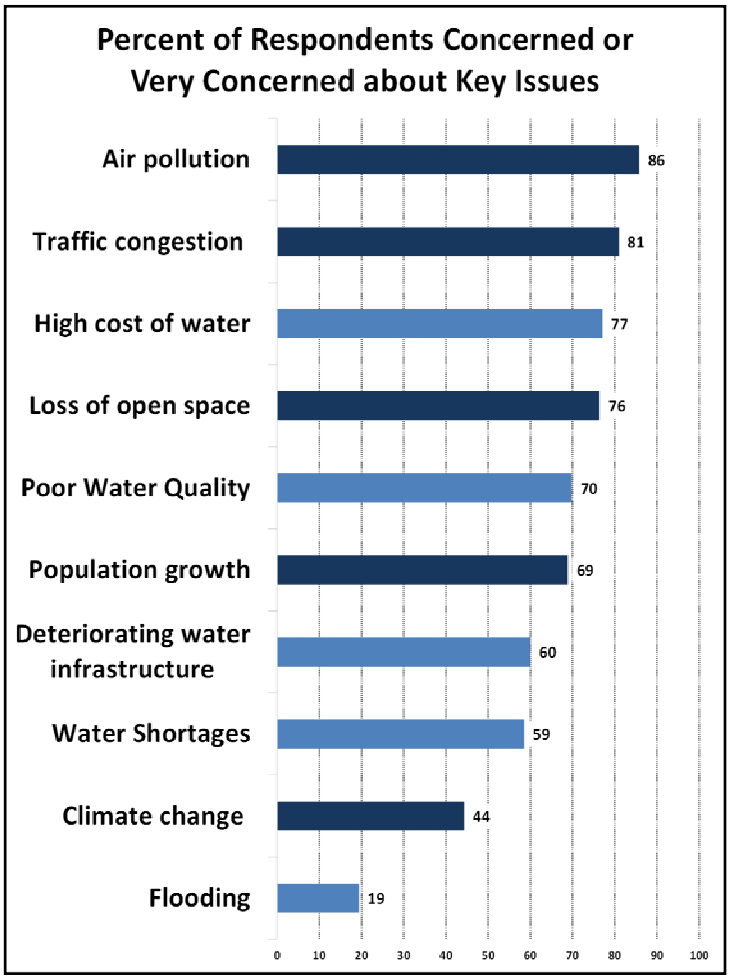
Farm water use was not a big concern.

- While 59% of respondents believed that residential lawns use too much water,
- Only 4% felt that agriculture was currently using too much water.

Water related issues take a back seat to growth concerns, except for cost.

- Air pollution (86%) and traffic congestion (81%) were the issues of greatest concern to respondents. Other important issues of concern were loss of open space (76%) and population growth (69%).
- Among water issues, the greatest concern related to the high cost of water (77%) and water quality (70%).
- Over half were concerned about water infrastructure (60%) and water shortages (59%).
- By far the lowest level of concern was expressed about flooding (19%).





How Should Riverton Respond to Short-Term Shortages?

Voluntary approaches most popular

- Riverton respondents indicated a very high level of support for educational efforts (88%) and voluntary water restrictions (91%).

Majority support mandatory limits

- Most respondents supported watering restrictions in parks, golf courses, and public properties (79%) and mandatory restrictions on watering lawns (61%)

Support for Long Term Water Policy in Riverton

Most supported having development pay for itself or expanding supply

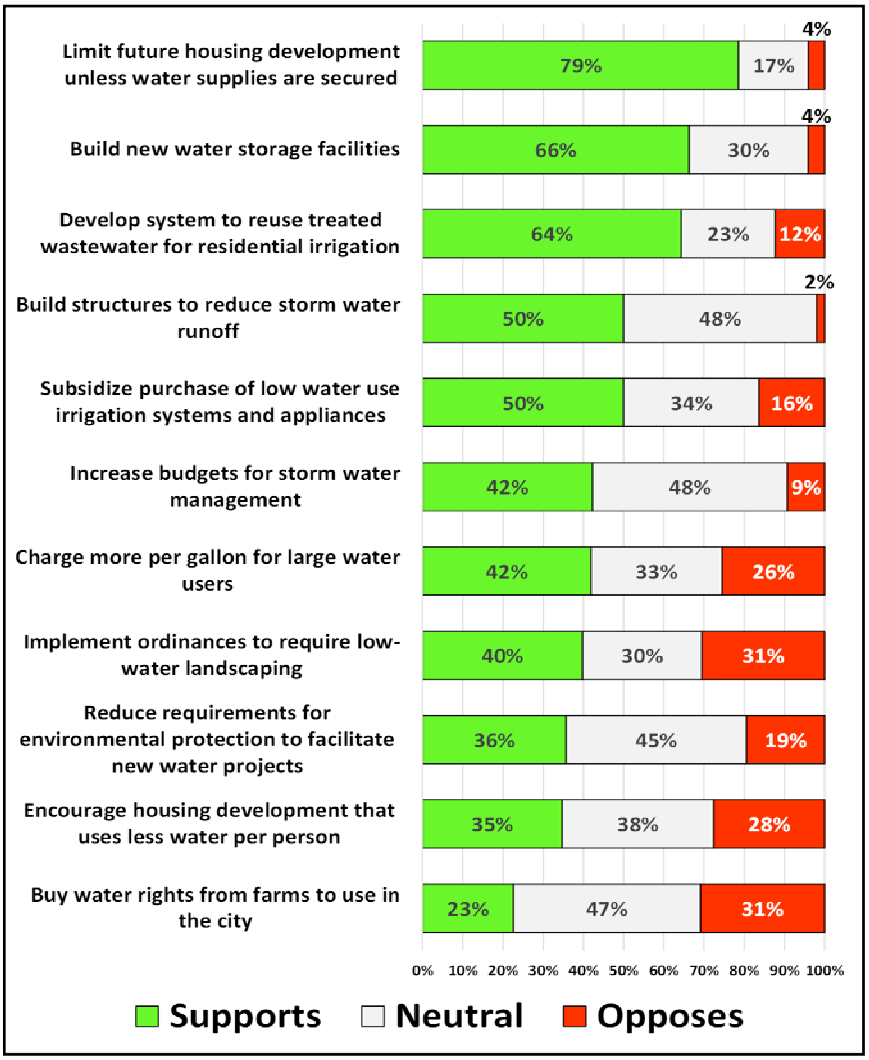
- Limiting future housing development unless water supplies are secured was supported by 79% of respondents.
- Nearly two thirds supported building new water storage facilities (66%) and reusing treated wastewater for residential irrigation (64%).

Many supported storm-water management

- Half supported local funding to build structures to reduce stormwater runoff and 42% supported increasing budgets for city stormwater management.

There was mixed support for incentivizing conservation

- Half supported subsidizing purchases of low water efficient irrigation systems or appliances.
- About 40% supported charging large water users more per gallon and passing ordinances to require low water landscaping.
- Smaller but significant numbers of respondents opposed these three policies.
- There was less support for city policies to encourage housing development that uses less water per person (35%), reduce requirements for environmental protection to facilitate new water projects (36%), or buy water rights from farms for city use (23%).



If you would like more information about the survey results, full reports are posted on our website:

www.iutahepscor.org/hhsurvey

Support for State Water Goals & Policies

Residents said state should ensure supply while protecting water quality and agriculture

- Nearly all supported state goals to ensure a supply of drinking water (97%) protect water quality (96%), and ensure water supplies for agriculture (81%).
- There was moderate support for state goals to protect wetlands and wildlife habitat (72%), save taxpayer money (59%), and ensure the supply of water for economic development (37%).

There was support for wide range of state policies

- The highest support was for the use of state funds to replace aging city water infrastructure (71%) or build new reservoirs or storage (69%), with significant support for state policies to set minimum standards for new residential construction to reduce water use (68%), to allow people to sell water saved from conservation (66%) and to establish minimum stream flow requirements to protect fish habitat (64%).
- Fewer supported state spending to construct pipelines to bring water to urban areas from other regions (39%) or efforts to facilitate transfers of water from farms to urban users (26%).