

Draft December 1, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Water Conservation and Drought Management Advisory Board
DATE: January 2022

Welcome and thank you for your service to the citizens and ecosystems of Moab.

The Moab City Water Conservation and Drought Management Advisory Board (often shortened to Water Advisory Board, WAB, Water Board or herein simply the “board”) is a volunteer citizen advisory group with a responsibility to inform Council on policies and practices to ensure a quality water supply for current and future residents of Moab. The seven-member board is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Many boardmembers have participated since the inception of the group in 2017.

An important exercise in which the City engages is to produce a state-mandated Water Conservation Plan every five years. The 2021 Plan was recently adopted by Council in December. The prior (2016) Plan laid out several goals and objectives which have been accomplished over the past five years, namely:

- forming the board;
- hiring a full-time Sustainability Director;
- hiring a water rights attorney; and
- developing a public education campaign regarding outdoor landscape watering.

The board contributed to many milestones including:

- provided input on draft Manti-La Sal Forest Management Plan (the Forest encompasses most of Moab’s watershed);
- advocated for graywater reuse systems and green infrastructure;
- developed, with the Sustainability Director, water saving tips for overnight accommodations, public restrooms and the MRAC;
- encouraged Council to engage a consultant to study Moab’s aquifer and estimate supply;
- sought to understand Moab’s “water budget”;
- embarked on a review of Moab City’s water rights;
- endorsed code revisions regarding efficient plumbing fixtures, use of culinary water for non-culinary purposes and reducing impact on water supply.

In addition, the board has considered secondary water sources (non-potable irrigation water); and has raised awareness of challenges to the City’s water supply, primarily driven by unchecked development in the valley.

Separately from the board, City staff have launched an effort to create a regional water authority, which is ultimately the purview of the Division of Water Rights (DWR). More work needs to be done to ensure an appropriate group of stakeholders participate in such a coalition. The board has developed informational materials for Council and other decision-makers to understand the regional water situation including the area’s water resources, ownership and over-allocation of the water rights, limits to production, potential future sources and more.

The 2021 Water Conservation Plan outlines several goals that the board is considering investigating this coming year with Council’s approbation and direction. Broadly speaking, the board’s historical interests can be classified into either “conservation” or “water quantity” or “supply” topics. Among the proposed projects are:

- Conservation techniques, education programs and initiatives for the public.
- Estimating water demand impacts and sanitary sewer capacity for forthcoming developments at Powerhouse Lane, Lionsback, USU/SITLA housing, and a potential Kane Creek subdivision, as well as smaller amounts of in-fill and ADU density increases.

- Updating existing mathematical models by ensuring proper monitoring of spring flow and well levels to determine if and when our aquifers are being overdrawn.
- Researching new water sources.
- Understanding how to delay implementation of new culinary water sources, including exploration of tighter conservation standards for new development and incentives for existing users; reduction of residential and/or commercial development; and substitution of secondary (nonpotable) water instead of culinary water for landscaping uses where not already implemented.

Essential to the board's effectiveness is meaningful City staff coordination and resource allocation to support our deliberations, suggestions and recommendations. Current board members believe this discussion around coordination, support and direction should open a broader conversation on board priorities in 2022 and beyond.

The board greatly appreciates your thoughts, questions, opinions and direction. We look forward to meeting in person to discuss these foundational needs and our recommendations moving forward.

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