

# Utah's Water Future

## Local Perspectives on Water Issues

Highlights from the 2014 iUTAH Household Survey

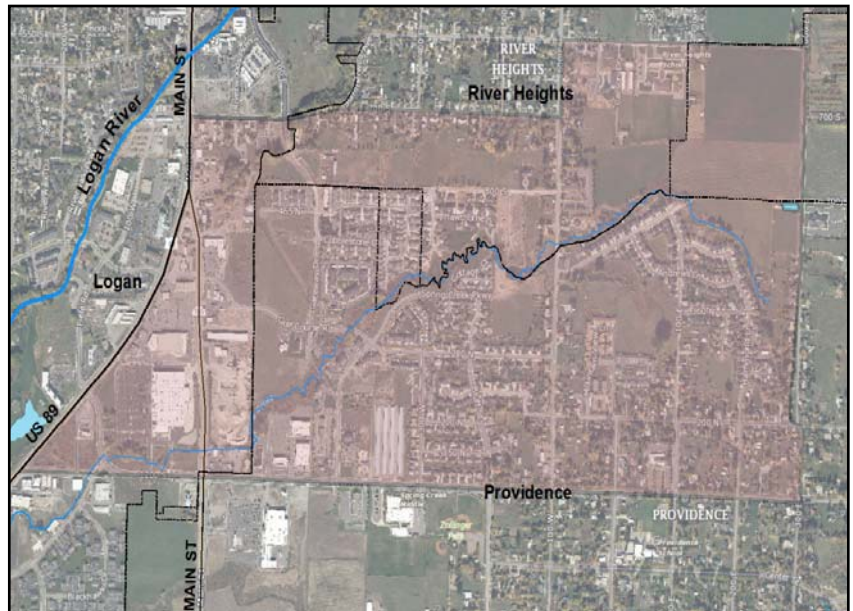
### SPRING CREEK HIGHLIGHTS



#### **Background:**

In July 2014, researchers from Utah State University and the University of Utah conducted a survey about water issues with residents in the Spring Creek neighborhood (pink area on map including mostly northern Providence, but also small areas in River Heights and Logan City).

We received responses from 74% of the Spring Creek households selected to participate (123 total households—86% from Providence). Characteristics of survey respondents were similar to the city as a whole based on Census information, with the survey somewhat underrepresenting those in the 18-35 age group and slightly over-representing females and those with a college degree.



#### **Household Water & Lawns**

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

- Over half of respondents (57%) reported a high degree of familiarity with how much they spend on water each month, but fewer (23%) were familiar with the volume of water they use

##### **Lawns mostly watered by residents**

- Most Spring Creek respondents indicated that they water their own lawns (73%),
- But 20% said a homeowners or condominium association does the watering and 7% indicated watering was done by a landlord

##### **Few water during the day**

- All respondents report watering lawn mainly in the morning, evening, or at night.

##### **Weather plays a key factor in watering decisions...**

- Nearly all of households (84%) say they try to adjust their lawn watering to the weather

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

- Nearly 80 percent indicated they water to try to prevent brown spots on their lawn and to maintain property value.
- Majorities said keeping a regular schedule (59%), conserving water (56%) and minimizing time spent watering (51%) were important considerations.
- Only 29% indicated they consider keeping neighbors happy in their watering decisions.

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## Secondary Water Systems

### Used by about one-fifth of households, mainly on lawns & gardens:

Among the 19% who had access to secondary water,

- More common among River Heights (35%) than Providence (16%) respondents
- Most (86%) receive it in open ditch or canal, and 10% from a pressurized pipe.
- Most use it for watering lawn and yard (62%) or vegetable gardens (24%). Only a few use it for farm crops or livestock.

### Most not satisfied with system

- Few respondents from Spring Creek who have secondary water service were satisfied with their systems (19%) and only 23% said they have attended a meeting with their secondary water provider
- Just over a third of respondents with access to secondary water (36%) were confident in the future security of the secondary water supply



## Water Quality

### Local water quality is generally seen as good.

- Most (85%) of Spring Creek respondents said their drinking water quality was “good” or “very good”, while just 5% rated it as “bad” or “very bad”
- Over half rated water in rivers and lakes upstream (50%) and streams and creeks in their neighborhood (55%) as “good”, while under half (41-42%) indicated they felt downstream waters were of “good” quality
- Downstream rivers and reservoirs were only rated as “bad” by 7-9% of respondents from Spring Creek

## Water Conservation

### Many residents think that they can do more to conserve water...

- Over half (54%) of Spring Creek respondents felt they could do more to reduce their indoor water use, while
- Just under one-third (30%) thought they could do more to reduce outdoor water use.
- A significant group (37%) was interested in installing a more efficient irrigation system, and 24% were interested in using more low water-use plants.

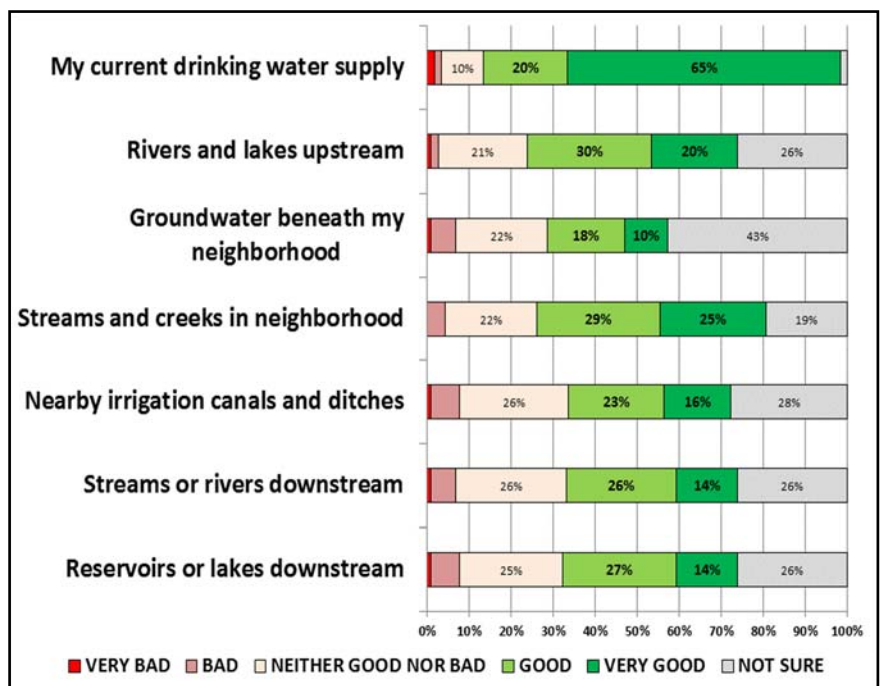
### ...but only a small percentage have actually decreased their water use

- A minority of Spring Creek respondents reported that they decreased either indoor (16%) or outdoor (11%) water use over the last five years.

### People most willing to conserve if it:

- Ensures future supply for their home (79%),
- Ensures future supply for farms (70%),
- Reduces their water bills (64%), and
- Improves fish & wildlife habitat (61%)

### People are least willing to conserve if savings are used to increase development in this area



## Concerns about Water and Other Issues

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

- Half of Spring Creek respondents thought there was enough city water to meet current needs
- Only 24% were confident in their city's future supply, and 37% were concerned about the future water supply

### Farm water use was not a big concern.

- While 45% of respondents believed that residential lawns use too much water,
- Only 3% felt that agriculture was currently using too much water.

### Water related issues take a back seat to growth concerns

- Traffic congestion (79%), air pollution (77%) and loss of open space (76%) were the topics of greatest concern to Spring Creek residents (see chart).
- Population growth was a concern by over sixty percent of respondents (61%),
- Among water issues, the greatest level of concern related to the high cost of water (56%), water shortages (56%), and deteriorating water infrastructure (53%).
- Just under half (48%) were concerned about poor water quality.
- The lowest level of concern was expressed about climate change (39%) and flooding (38%).

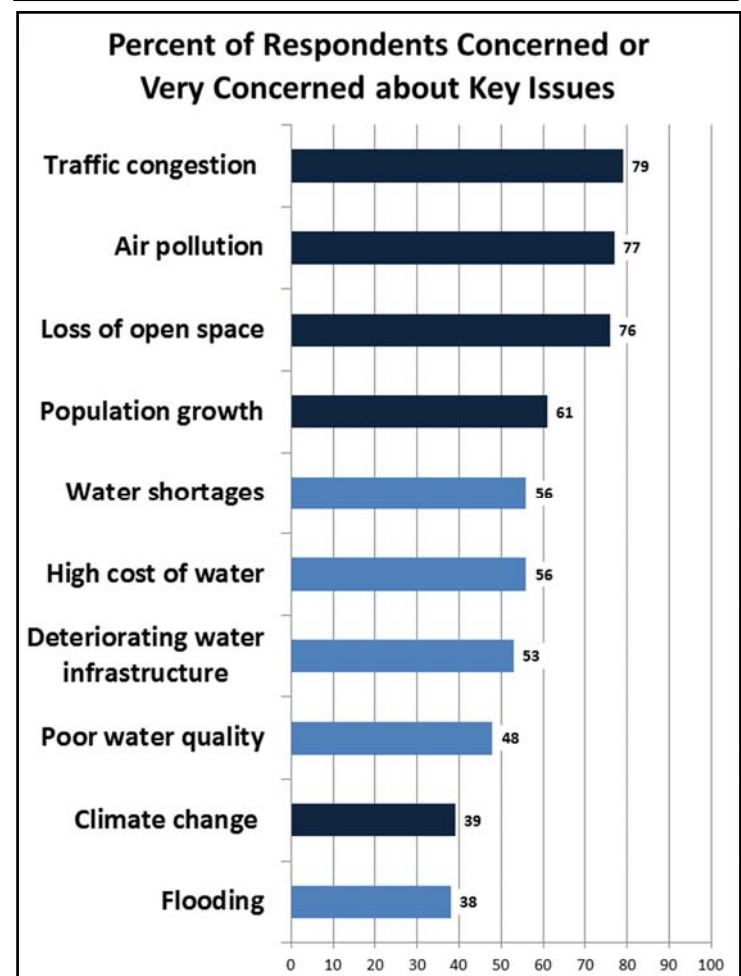
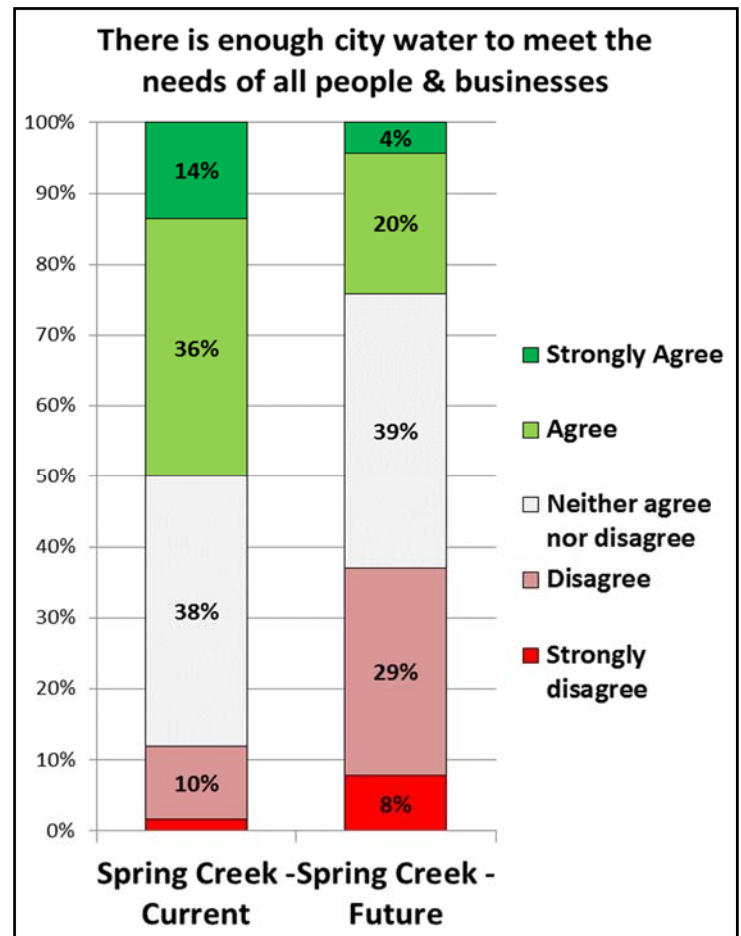
## How Should Local Cities Respond to Short-Term Shortages?

### Voluntary approaches most popular

- Spring Creek respondents indicated a very high level of support for educational efforts (87%) and voluntary water restrictions (86%).

### Majority support mandatory limits

- Most respondents supported watering restrictions in parks, golf courses, and public properties (78%) or mandatory restrictions on watering lawns (74%)





## Support for Long Term City Water Policies

### **A majority supported having development pay for itself**

The most popular policies were

- Limiting future housing development unless water supplies are secured (71%), and
- Reusing treated wastewater for residential irrigation (71% support)

### **Strong support for building structures for water storage and managing storm-water**

- Over half supported local funding to build new water storage (63%) and structures to reduce stormwater runoff (51%)

### **There was modest support for incentivizing conservation**

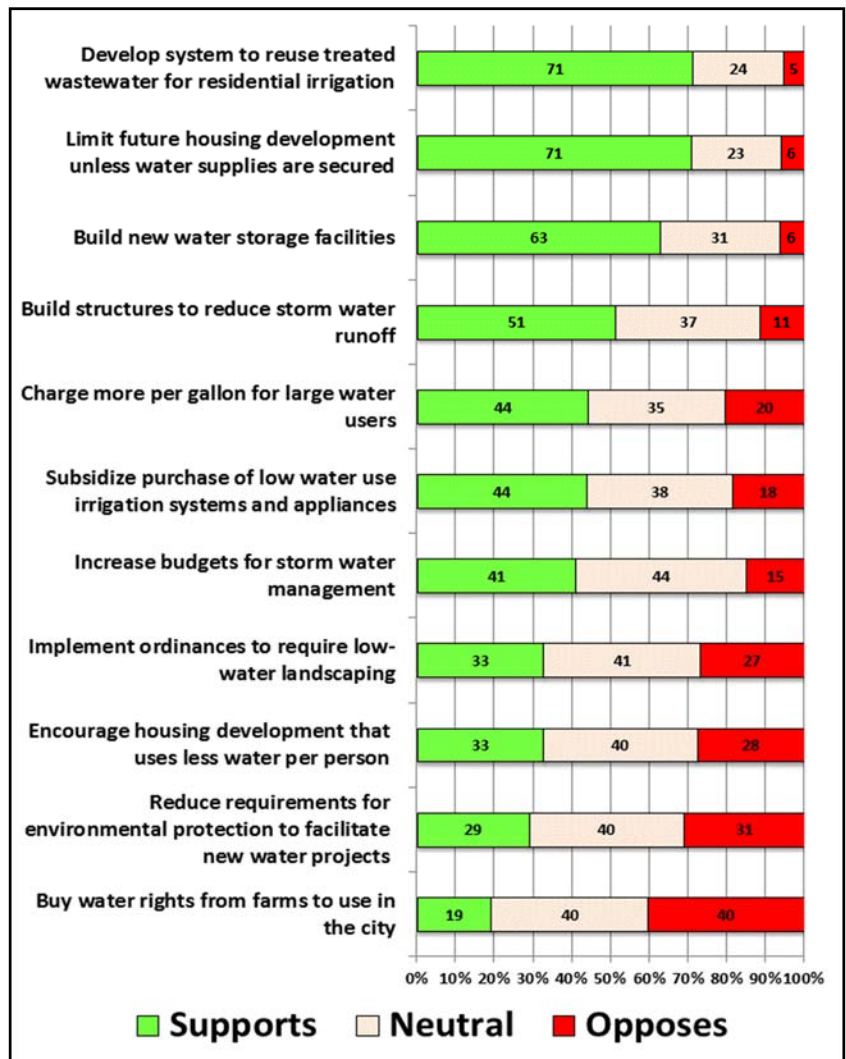
- Less than half supported charging more per gallon for large water users (44%) or city subsidies for the purchase of low water use irrigation systems and appliances (44%)

Less than a third supported city policies to

- Encourage housing types that use less water per person (33%)
- Implement ordinances to require low-water landscaping (33%),
- Reduce requirements for environmental protection to facilitate new water projects (29%), or
- Buying water rights from farms for urban uses (19%)

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

[www.iutahepscor.org/hhsurvey](http://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 of ensuring a supply of drinking water (96%), protecting water quality (94%), and ensuring water supplies for agriculture (89%)
- A strong majority support protecting wetlands and wildlife habitat (64%), and there is moderate support for a state goal of saving taxpayer money (50%)

### **There is support for wide range of state policies**

- The highest support was for the use of state funds to replace aging city water infrastructure (68%) and building new reservoirs or storage (64%)
- Over half supported setting minimum standards for new residential construction to reduce water use (59%), allowing people with water rights to sell water saved from conservation (56%), establishing minimum flow requirements for streams to protect fish (53%), and using state funds to improve efficiency of agricultural irrigation (50%)
- Few support transfer of water from farms to urban uses (28%)