

## Conservation & Education

Water conservation is a multi-faceted concept. As such, it is difficult to define it as a single, all-encompassing definition. Traditionally, many water resource managers saw their reservoirs as a way to conserve water by storing and protecting it. This notion of conservation is supported by the dictionary definition of “conservation”:

1. act of preserving or protecting, as from loss, harm, or waste.
2. public protection and care of natural resources such as forests, rivers, and wildlife.

Although this definition is still applicable, water conservation is now more commonly portrayed as “the beneficial reduction in water use, waste, and loss to satisfy a particular purpose”, or, more broadly put, as “optimizing the use of current water supplies.” This may be the most practical definition of all. However water conservation is defined, it is much more extensive than just household practices like taking shorter showers or xeriscaping your landscape. While important, these characterize only a small portion of water conservation efforts.

Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District (District) is proud of its ongoing water conservation program. As a regional water provider, it is the District’s responsibility to show stewardship in water conservation and promote efficient use of this valuable resource. The District has continually expanded these efforts by adding both programs and staff to carry-out the programs.

The District has increased its public education program considerably through better distribution of water conservation information. Public education and outreach are pillars of its water conservation program. The core of the program consists of informational brochures, educational displays, and online resources. These materials are distributed at meetings, on tours, at display booths or by public request. The District discusses and emphasizes the importance of water conservation at every opportunity.

The District hosts water festivals, workshops, tours, and trainings that provide numerous educational opportunities for children, homeowners, and professionals. The District’s Board of Directors also encourages and promotes water conservation and efficient water resource management through its policies and programs. The District is involved with many organizations that actively promote water conservation and education. The District is a member of and supports the Colorado Water Wise Council, the Irrigation Association, the Tamarisk Coalition, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, and the Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance.

Water conservation in Colorado is no longer seen as something to do only during times of drought. Drought responses such as watering restrictions and field fallowing are put into practice to manage short-term water shortages. However, water conservation has become and will continue to be instrumental in long-term water resource management.

Economic and demographic growth in southeastern Colorado is putting pressure on regional water providers because the development of new water supplies has not kept pace with the growth. Currently, the District provides supplemental water to approximately 620,000 water users in the Arkansas River Basin. This number is expected to increase to over 1.3 million by the year 2040. According to the Statewide Water Supply Initiative, an increase in municipal water demand of 98,000 acre-feet (AF) by 2030 is expected in the Arkansas River Basin. The District believes that water conservation, through an assortment of best management practices, policies, and educational efforts, will play an instrumental role in meeting the projected shortfall.