

# Water Conservation Customer Satisfaction Survey

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The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) are developing a statewide water conservation and efficiency program to promote water efficiency and conservation across all water use sectors. This survey is one element of the joint DNR and PSC Water Conservation Potential Study, scheduled to be completed in September 2011.

In June 2011, the PSC surveyed 569 Wisconsin water utility managers and clerks to gauge the effect of conservation measures on customer satisfaction. The PSC assumed the utility professionals have a good understanding of their communities and would provide responses representative of their customers' interests. However, it is important to recognize the possibility of personal biases in responses. The PSC received 286 responses for a response rate of 50.3%. Respondents were asked to score nineteen water conservation measures as to the likely impact on customer satisfaction ranging from mostly positive to mostly negative (Table 3). Respondents were also asked to identify conservation measures that have already been implemented in their utility service areas.

## Notable Findings:

- Most respondents believe that conservation measures will likely have a positive effect on customer satisfaction (Figure 1)
- Voluntary conservation measures (i.e. incentives) will have the most positive effect
- 1/3 of utilities currently provide conservation education and information programs for their customers

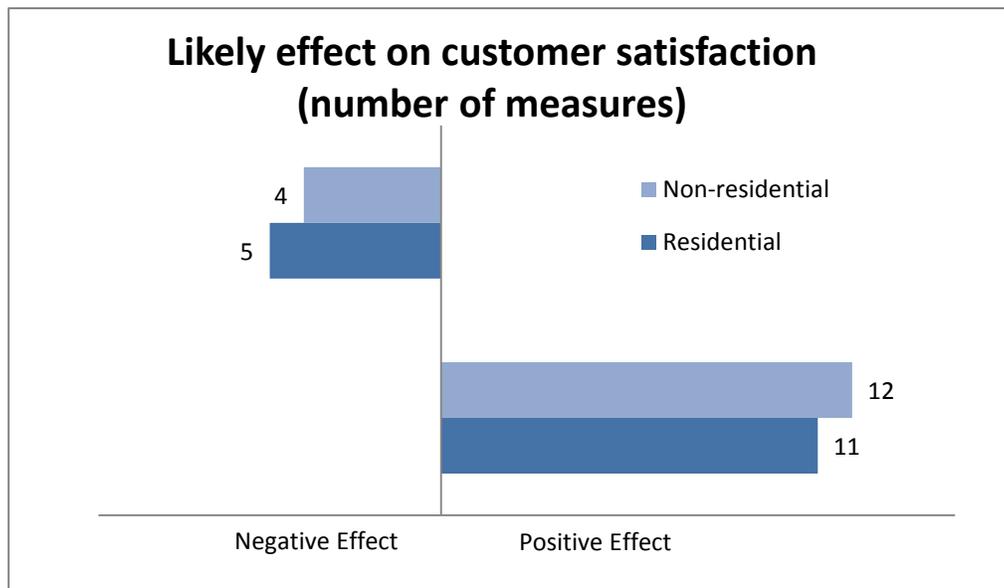


Figure 1: Likely effect of water conservation measures on customer satisfaction

### Customer Satisfaction

Programs related to information and education ranked as having the most positive effect on customer satisfaction. The highest ranking measure was the installation of automatic meter reading and the use of automatic customer notifications. Over 70% of respondents indicated a positive impact on both residential and non-residential customers. This measure is also the most commonly implemented throughout the state, as shown in Table 1. The second highest ranked measure was education and information programs. A majority of respondents indicated a positive impact on both residential (73%) and non-residential (66%) customers.

*If the high efficiency items are mandated to replace current items the response would be "Mostly Negative."  
-Utility Manager*

Responses revealed a preference for voluntary and incentive-based conservation programs. Five conservation measures were identified as having a negative effect on customer satisfaction: adoption of an outdoor water use ordinance, a water waste ordinance, more stringent building codes, implementation of inclining block rates for residential customers and seasonal rates for service areas. Of the nineteen conservation measures in the survey, these five were the only measures that would make implementation of water conservation programs mandatory.

### Comments and Concerns

Two common concerns were identified by respondents in the open comment section: 1) how to fund conservation programs and 2) the loss of revenue that may occur following the implementation of conservation measures.

### Implementation

Respondents indicated that one or more water conservation measures have already been implemented in 174 utility service areas (Table 2). Survey respondents identified a range of implementation mechanisms including water utility rebate programs, municipal ordinances, installation of automated meters and Community Development Authority grant programs. Several respondents also included Focus on Energy and other rebate programs for appliances, illustrating the nexus of water and energy conservation.

*We currently offer a dishwasher rebate but it has been based more on the electric savings than water.  
-Utility Manager*

Table 1: Most Commonly Implemented Conservation Measures

Conservation Measure	Utility Service Areas
Automated meter reading and customer notifications	88
Education and information programs	85
Water audits	43
Submetering multifamily accounts	39
Outdoor water use ordinance	36

Table 2: Implemented Water Conservation Measures

Have you implemented the following measures in your service area?			Response Count
<b>AMR and automatic customer notification</b>	Yes	34.1%	261
	No	65.9%	
<b>Education and information</b>	Yes	33.1%	263
	No	66.9%	
<b>Water audits</b>	Yes	16.9%	261
	No	83.1%	
<b>Submetering multifamily accounts</b>	Yes	14.7%	266
	No	85.3%	
<b>Lawn watering/outdoor water use ordinance</b>	Yes	13.4%	269
	No	86.6%	
<b>Low-flow showerhead and faucet replacement</b>	Yes	6.1%	280
	No	93.9%	
<b>Seasonal rates</b>	Yes	6.1%	261
	No	93.9%	
<b>Water waste ordinance</b>	Yes	4.5%	268
	No	95.5%	
<b>Toilet repair and rebate</b>	Yes	3.5%	285
	No	96.5%	
<b>Inclining block rates for residential customers</b>	Yes	3.4%	263
	No	96.6%	
<b>Clothes washer rebate</b>	Yes	3.3%	273
	No	96.7%	
<b>Dishwasher replacement</b>	Yes	1.8%	275
	No	99.6%	
<b>Recirculating cooling tower with conductivity controller incentive</b>	Yes	1.5%	270
	No	98.5%	
<b>Low-flow or waterless urinal</b>	Yes	1.4%	282
	No	98.6%	
<b>Property manager workshops</b>	Yes	0.8%	264
	No	99.2%	
<b>Landscape contractor workshops</b>	Yes	0.8%	259
	No	99.2%	
<b>Rain sensor/weather based irrigation controller incentive</b>	Yes	0.7%	268
	No	99.3%	
<b>Pre-rinse spray valve retrofit and replacement</b>	Yes	0.4%	273
	No	99.6%	

Table 3: Customer Satisfaction Responses

Table 3 ranks the likely effect of water conservation measures on customer satisfaction from most positive to most negative. Where applicable, the ranking is based on the average of residential and non-residential points.

		Mostly Positive (2)	Somewhat Positive (1)	No Effect (0)	Somewhat Negative (-1)	Mostly Negative (-2)	Average Points	Response Count		
1	AMR and automatic customer notification	Residential	35.0%	40.4%	20.4%	3.1%	1.2%	1.05	260	
	Non-residential	32.9%	37.4%	24.3%	3.6%	1.8%	0.96	222		
2	Education and information	Residential	17.7%	55.4%	23.5%	2.3%	1.2%	0.86	260	
	Non-residential	15.3%	50.5%	32.0%	0.9%	1.4%	0.77	222		
3	Clothes washer rebate	Residential	19.9%	54.0%	19.5%	5.4%	1.1%	0.86	261	
	Non-residential	13.8%	33.3%	46.7%	5.8%	0.4%	0.54	225		
4	Toilet Repair and Rebate	Residential	14.3%	47.8%	28.3%	7.7%	1.8%	0.65	272	
	Non-residential	11.3%	41.4%	39.7%	6.7%	0.8%	0.56	239		
5	Low-flow showerhead and faucet replacement	Residential	15.2%	53.5%	18.2%	10.8%	2.2%	0.69	269	
	Non-residential	10.9%	33.5%	47.1%	7.2%	1.4%	0.45	221		
6	Pre-rinse spray valve retrofit and replacement	Residential	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	Non-residential	10.8%	36.8%	42.0%	8.6%	1.9%	0.46	269		
7	Dishwasher replacement	Residential	9.9%	46.8%	31.9%	8.7%	2.7%	0.52	263	
	Non-residential	10.0%	29.6%	48.3%	10.4%	1.7%	0.36	230		
8	Low-flow or waterless urinal	Residential	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	Non-residential	6.1%	40.1%	42.7%	9.0%	2.2%	0.39	279		
9	Water audits	Residential	10.8%	42.9%	23.9%	15.8%	6.6%	0.36	259	
	Non-residential	12.8%	38.4%	29.2%	13.7%	5.9%	0.38	219		

Table 3: Customer Satisfaction Responses

		Mostly Positive (2)	Somewhat Positive (1)	No Effect (0)	Somewhat Negative (-1)	Mostly Negative (-2)	Average Points	Response Count	
<b>10</b>	Recirculating cooling tower with conductivity controller incentive	Residential	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
		Non-residential	8.7%	27.0%	56.3%	5.3%	2.7%	0.34	263
<b>11</b>	Property Manager Workshops	Multifamily	6.6%	27.2%	56.4%	6.6%	3.1%	0.28	257
<b>12</b>	Submetering multifamily accounts	Multifamily	9.8%	34.5%	31.8%	19.3%	4.5%	0.26	264
<b>13</b>	Rain sensor/weather based irrigation controller incentive	Residential	5.8%	25.6%	56.6%	8.1%	3.9%	0.21	258
		Non-residential	6.2%	26.5%	56.6%	6.6%	4.0%	0.24	226
<b>14</b>	Landscape contractor workshops	Residential	4.6%	25.1%	60.2%	6.9%	3.1%	0.21	259
		Non-residential	5.0%	26.8%	57.7%	6.4%	4.1%	0.22	220
<b>15</b>	Inclining block rates for residential customers	Residential	3.1%	23.5%	32.3%	30.0%	11.2%	-0.23	260
		Non-residential	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>16</b>	Water waste ordinance	Residential	2.3%	16.7%	39.5%	31.4%	10.1%	-0.30	258
		Non-residential	2.3%	16.8%	45.5%	25.9%	9.5%	-0.24	220
<b>17</b>	Lawn watering/outdoor water use ordinance	Residential	5.7%	17.7%	24.5%	36.6%	15.5%	-0.38	265
		Non-residential	4.5%	13.2%	43.2%	25.5%	13.6%	-0.30	220
<b>18</b>	Seasonal rates	Residential	3.5%	18.9%	25.9%	36.3%	15.4%	-0.41	259
		Non-residential	3.2%	15.0%	34.5%	31.4%	15.9%	-0.42	220
<b>19</b>	More stringent building codes	Residential	3.8%	16.8%	27.1%	37.4%	14.9%	-0.43	262
		Non-residential	4.0%	12.9%	29.3%	39.6%	14.2%	-0.47	225