



## PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Saratoga Springs Receives Award for Decreasing Water Usage 30 Percent During Rapid Population Growth**

**Saratoga Springs, UT, March 14, 2018** – The Rural Water Association of Utah recently awarded the City of Saratoga Springs the System Resource Efficiency Award for implementing a secondary water metering system that decreased irrigation water usage by 30 percent.

“We are proud to receive this award,” said Mayor Jim Miller. “It shows the ingenuity of city staff and our commitment in Saratoga Springs to be good stewards over our limited water resources here in Utah.”

The total project cost to install the needed 4,000 meters throughout the city was approximately \$3.6 million. The project was funded through a bond, which is repaid for through the revenues generated by metering secondary water.

During the first year of implementation, city-wide irrigation water usage by residents and businesses decreased from nearly 1 billion gallons in 2015 to less than 800 million gallons in 2016—a 21 percent decrease—despite rapid growth. Even more telling was the average usage per customer, which decreased by 27 percent among residents and businesses.

To encourage residents and businesses to lower their water usage, the City switched from a flat-rate system where all users were charged the same fee, regardless of the amount of water used, to a tiered system that charged customers in thousand-gallon increments, based on lot size, landscaped area and the water rights allocated to each property. In addition, the City lowered the base rate that is charged each month to cover fixed costs.

As a result, customers that maintained monthly irrigation water usage at or below their specified water allotment, saw a decrease in their monthly bill. Those customers that use more than their water allotment each month are responsible for paying for their overuse.

“Through a metered system, the city is not only encouraging greater water conservation among our residents and businesses, we are ensuring that those who use beyond their allotment pay for their overuse and no longer infringe on the water rights of other property owners,” said Miller.

Like most cities in Utah, Saratoga Springs requires that when a new home or business is built or platted within the City, a specific allotment of water rights must be dedicated to the City to cover the water needs of the property. When property owners and customers use more than their allotment of water, it creates a financial burden on the water system to acquire more water rights and build additional infrastructure necessary to meet the larger demand.

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In 2015, Saratoga Springs City officials found that homes and businesses were using levels of irrigation water that far exceeded the capacity of the infrastructure and the allotment of water rights tied to their individual properties. This level of water usage, coupled with one of the fastest growing populations in Utah, was proving unsustainable for the City and funding additional infrastructure needed to meet these high demands was impractical.

“Educating the public and remaining transparent throughout the process has been vital in effectively transitioning from a flat-rate system to a metered rate,” said Miller.

During and after implementation, the City held several public meeting to educate the public about the transition and answer questions about how the new billing system works. In 2017 alone, the city held a series of six Water Open Houses from May to October to assist the public through the transition.

In addition, information was sent out with monthly bills, articles were published in the City Newsletter and customers can estimated their monthly utility bill through an irrigation calculator on the city’s website at [www.saratogaspringscity.com/irrigationcalculator](http://www.saratogaspringscity.com/irrigationcalculator).

Since implementation of the secondary water meters, Saratoga Springs has received several calls from other cities throughout the State, water districts and out-of-state conservation groups who want to use Saratoga Springs as a model and case study for effectively transitioning from flat-rate system to a metered system.

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**About Saratoga Springs:** The City of Saratoga Springs is an exciting and young pro-development community, located on the northwest shores of Utah Lake in the center of Utah’s Wasatch Front Metropolitan Area. The City incorporated in December of 1997 and experienced rapid growth from the very beginning. Today there is more development interest in the City than at any other time in its short history. Visit us online at [www.saratogaspringscity.com](http://www.saratogaspringscity.com) or follow us on Facebook @cityofsaratogasprings and Twitter @saratogasprngut.

**Photo1:** RWUA Annual Conference at the Awards Banquet, Wednesday, February 28, 2018, left to right: George Leatham, Assistant Public Works Director of Utilities; Matt Allinson, Water Supervisor; Colton Hall, Maintenance II – Water; Drew Taylor, Maintenance I – Water; Lance Parkinson, Maintenance III – Water.

**Photo 2:** Example of newly installed secondary water meter.