



# **CITY OF AUSTIN DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**Developed to Meet Requirements Outlined in 30 TAC § 288.20 and § 288.22**



**Water Conservation Division  
City of Austin, Texas  
PWS # 2270001**

May 2, 2024

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**DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN**  
**City of Austin, Texas**  
**May 2024**

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## **Section I: Declaration of Policy, Purpose and Intent**

The City of Austin (the City) maintains a decades-long commitment to ensuring a sustainable water supply through demand management measures. The latest update to Austin’s Drought Contingency Plan (the Plan) builds upon this legacy. This iteration of the Plan retains all measures from previous versions while incorporating new strategies to better address droughts in the future.

Designed as a comprehensive strategy, the Plan focuses on addressing water shortages and emergencies, with specific attention to domestic water use, sanitation, fire protection, and public well-being. In accordance with Section 11.1272 of the Texas Water Code and Chapter 288 of Title 30 of the Texas Administrative Code, the City regularly updates this plan, underscoring the importance of adaptability to evolving water supply dynamics.

This document outlines the City's strategic response to challenges posed by demand surges, infrastructure constraints, and droughts, including historical critical droughts. Through coordination with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), the Drought Contingency Plans of both the LCRA and the City are consistent in terms of targets and goals. The City’s plan is more proactive, including the implementation activities necessary to conserve water.

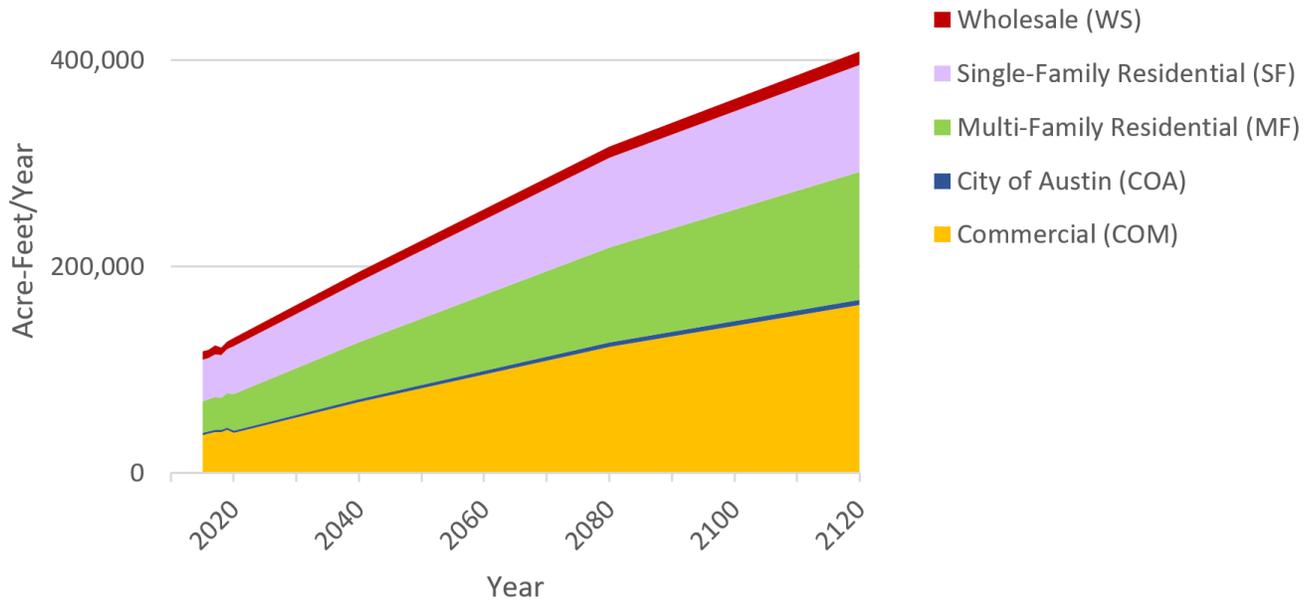
Detailed within the regulatory framework of the City of Austin’s Municipal Code, the Water Conservation Code (updated in conjunction with this plan in May 2024) forms an integral part of our proactive water management actions. This Drought Contingency Plan serves not only to fulfill regulatory mandates but also as a detailed reference for effective drought management, with the amended Water Conservation Code accessible in Appendix A.

## **Section II: Background**

### **A. Projected Water Demands**

Austin Water’s customer base is projected to increase from the current population of 1.1 million to 1.3 million by 2040, as outlined in the City of Austin's 2018 Water Forward Integrated Water Resources Plan. This growth in population and businesses is anticipated to result in a diversion of 67,600 million gallons in 2040, as projected in the 2018 Water Forward Plan (see **Figure 1**).

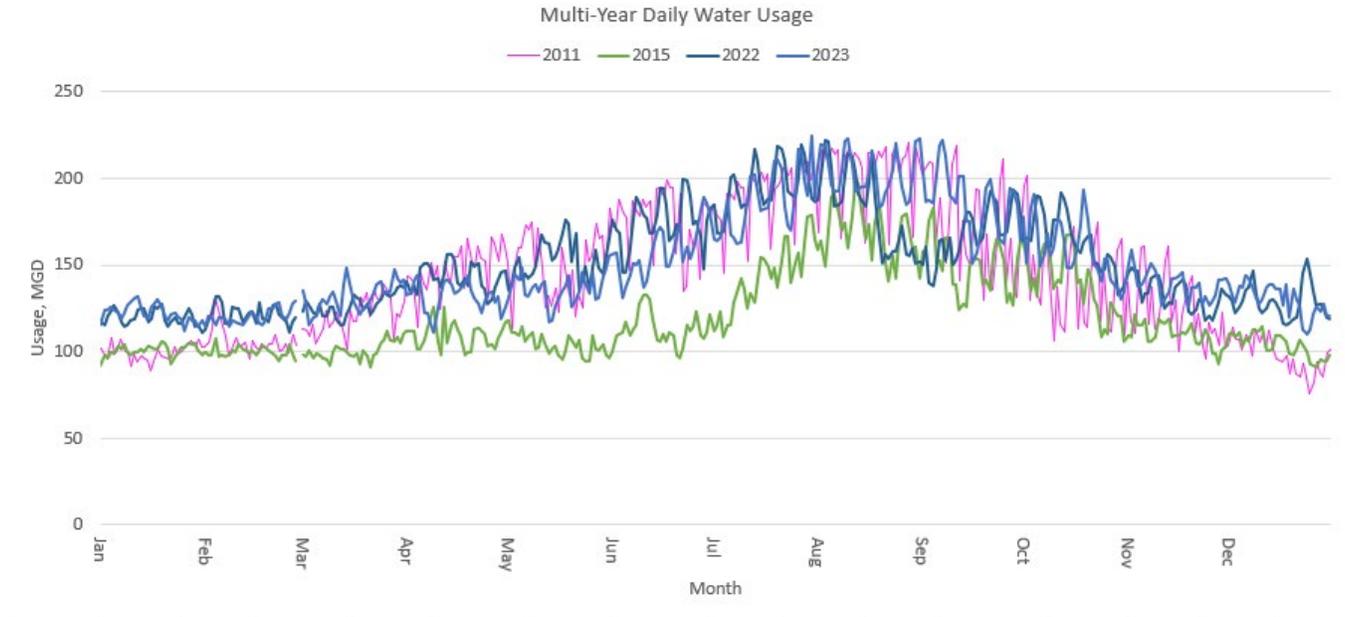
**Figure 1. Water demand projections from the 2018 Water Forward Plan**



Long-term projected water demands represent average usage, drawing from historical data on water consumption and projections of growth among various water users in the community. However, these projections do not account for short-term increases in water usage during hot, dry conditions typically associated with droughts. Such short-term increases of water use during drought can be seen in Figure 2. The figure depicts the daily water usage in millions of gallons per day (mgd) for Austin Water over a span of four years:

- 2011 (blue) – the driest single year on record during the region’s Drought of Record (2009-2014).
- 2015 (orange) – a recent year with above-average precipitation and low water usage.
- 2022 (yellow) and 2023 (maroon) – years following the declaration of Drought Stage 1 on June 6, 2022.

**Figure 2. Historical daily water use during a wet year (2015) and dry years (2011, 2022, 2023).**



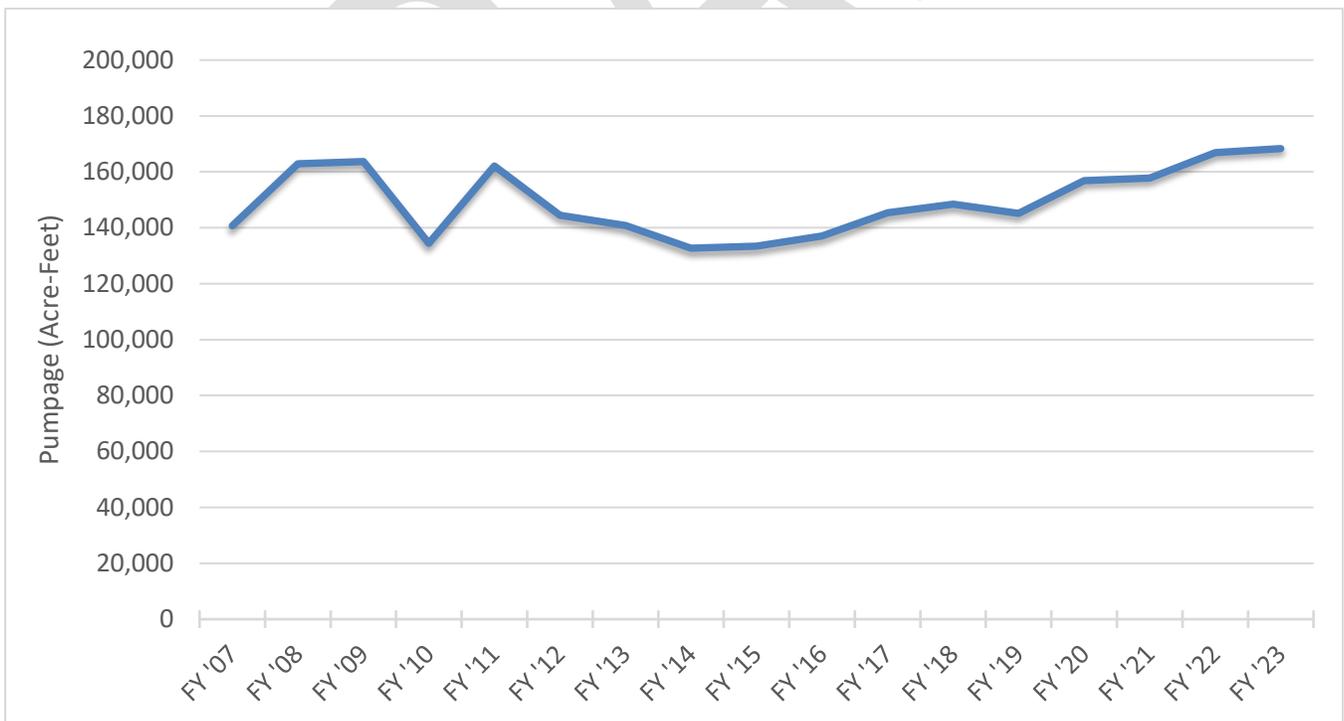
In all years, the surge in landscape irrigation can increase daily water demands in August by 50 to 60 percent compared to January, even in a wet year like 2015. While Austin remains committed to water stewardship year-round, the most significant potential for short-term water savings during a drought lies in reducing landscape irrigation between June and October, alongside other conservation measures offering substantial near-term savings. However, achieving an overall reduction in water usage during a drought is highly challenging using traditional methods of public outreach and enforcement patrols.

### B. Water Supply and Water Supply Contracts

The City holds permitted municipal water rights granted by the State of Texas, allowing a maximum diversion of 292,703 acre-feet per year (AF/yr) from the Colorado River for municipal use. These water rights operate within the State's priority water rights system as run-of-river rights. This means the City can divert water under these rights only if it's available after fulfilling other more senior water rights. While the City's water rights include some of the most senior rights in the river basin, there are conditions, particularly during dry weather, when this run-of-river water may not reliably be available. Consequently, the City has water supply contracts with LCRA to ensure water availability under various hydrologic conditions, including droughts.

In 1999, the City of Austin secured a firm water supply of 325,000 AF/yr through a contract with LCRA, utilizing stored water in the Highland Lakes and other sources to support the City's senior water rights. This contract is renewable by the City of Austin until the year 2100. In 2007, Austin entered into a supplemental water supply agreement with LCRA to provide an additional 250,000 AF/yr of firm water to be incrementally planned for future needs beyond the 1999 contract's 325,000 AF/yr level. The 325,000 AF/yr component of the City's firm municipal water supply is roughly double the peak annual diversion level of 174,781 AF/yr, which occurred in 2022. The most recent five-year average is approximately 164,409 AF/yr. (See Figure 3)

**Figure 3. Historic City of Austin Diversion Volumes**



According to its 2020 Water Management Plan, the LCRA intends to manage water supplies in the Colorado River to ensure that stored water for firm demands is available without shortage, even in a repeat of the Drought of Record (DOR). When the LCRA's Board declares a Drought Worse than the Drought of Record (DWDR), mandatory pro-rata curtailment of firm water demand is required. The declaration of a DWDR involves evaluating hydrologic and water supply conditions based on specific criteria, including drought duration, inflow volumes, and combined storage conditions. LCRA may also mandate curtailments of firm water demand in response to other water emergencies that significantly reduce the available firm water supply. If a DWDR declaration is issued, LCRA may, following notification and approval of a pro-rata curtailment plan, enforce mandatory curtailment of firm customers. The City has adopted a Water Conservation Code (Appendix A) that authorizes consideration and implementation of emergency conservation measures if water use needs to be curtailed during a DWDR declaration.

In 2023, the LCRA initiated work to revise the previous drought stage triggers, which were subsequently adopted by their board on March 26, 2024. In response to the addition of both a new drought stage and mechanism for determining drought stage triggers, the City has updated its triggers to align with both the LCRA and our community's strong commitment to water conservation.

### **C. Drought Conditions and Management Actions**

LCRA manages the Highland Lakes as a system, which include its water supply reservoirs, Lakes Travis and Buchanan, and results in a maximum combined storage capacity of approximately 2.0 million acre-feet. LCRA utilizes combined storage levels in Lakes Travis and Buchanan, inflows to the Highland Lakes, and other hydrologic factors as indicators of water supply conditions, including potential severe, long-term drought conditions. Combined storage levels also trigger the implementation of drought contingency plan stages. The historical Drought of Record for the Colorado River basin region, which encompasses the City of Austin, occurred during the years 1947-1957, when the combined water storage levels of Lakes Travis and Buchanan plummeted to a low of 621,221 acre-feet. Based on unprecedented conditions in February of 2015, LCRA declared that the basin entered a new "critical period," defined as a time period with the driest conditions and lowest inflows.

To mitigate adverse effects from periods of severe water shortages, Austin's Water Conservation Code (Section 6-4) outlines the City's water use stages within its service area during such periods caused by drought, water supply contamination, system outage due to failure or damage of the water system, or other emergency conditions. Additionally, if the available supply falls short of the anticipated demand, the City will assess and implement further emergency demand management measures, as detailed in the Water Conservation Code (Appendix A). All measures outlined in the Water Conservation Code are considered part of this Plan.

### D. Water System Capacity

Austin Water currently serves approximately 250,000 connections with over 4,044 miles of water mains. In 2023, Austin Water provided water to an approximate retail service area population of 1,096,486 and a wholesale customer population of 53,770, totaling approximately 1,150,256 individuals. All the City’s drinking water is sourced from the Colorado River. Two water treatment plants, with a combined capacity to treat and distribute 285 million gallons per day (MGD), draw water from Lake Austin. A third water treatment plant, with a capacity of 50 MGD, draws water from Lake Travis. Table 1 summarizes the current plant capacities.

**Table 1. City of Austin Water Treatment Plants and Capacity**

Plant Name	Year Constructed	Treatment Capacity (million gallons/day)
Davis	1954	118 <sup>a</sup>
Ullrich	1969	167 <sup>b</sup>
Handcox	2014	50 <sup>c</sup>
<i>Total</i>		335

a) Expanded in 1963, 1977, 1987, and 1999.

b) Modernized in 1993 to meet the higher standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act and expanded in 1987 and 2000. Capacity expansion from 100 to 167 MGD was completed in 2008.

c) Capacity can be expanded to 300 MGD over time.

## Section III: Trigger Conditions and Goals

The City of Austin has established a baseline water conservation stage, which encompasses water efficiency measures that are in place regardless of the drought stage and apply to all retail water customers. In 2012, the city adopted a permanent Water Conservation Stage containing year-round water conservation measures, with additional measures enacted since then. The following measures are in effect during the baseline Conservation Stage, when our reservoirs hold more than 1.4 million acre-feet full:

- Residential and commercial facilities may irrigate only before 10:00 a.m. or after 7:00 p.m. on designated outdoor water use days.
- Automatic irrigation systems are restricted to one designated outdoor water use day per week, allowing up to fifteen hours of irrigation.
- Hose-end sprinklers are permitted on up to two designated outdoor water use days per week, allowing for a total of thirty hours of irrigation.
- Mandatory commercial irrigation, cooling tower, and car wash efficiency assessment programs are in place.
- Commercial pressure washing efficiency requirements are enforced.
- Restaurants are required to serve water only upon request.
- Hotels are mandated to offer linen reuse programs.
- Washing of vehicles and outdoor surfaces is permitted only with a hose equipped with a positive shut-off or using a bucket.
- Commercial patio misters may operate only between 4:00 p.m. and midnight.
- Irrigation design requirements exceed those set by the State of Texas.

Austin's City Manager or their designee monitors water supply, water system capacity, and demand conditions to determine when to consider implementing additional conservation actions for the City's retail water customers, as outlined in the demand, combined storage capacity, inflow into reservoirs, and emergency triggers listed in Table 2.

The decision to enact an inflow-based trigger will be made on March 1st and July 1st each year. This will involve assessing the previous three-month average inflows into the reservoirs. If that average inflow is less than the 25th percentile of the historic average for the same three-month period, the trigger condition will be met.

**Table 2. Demand, Supply and Emergency Triggers**

Demand Triggers					
Stage	Trigger	Goal	Action <sup>a</sup>	Irrigation Restriction <sup>a</sup>	End Condition
Stage 2	300 MGD for three consecutive days	Reduce water use by 15% of 300 MGD	Drought Response Stage Two Regulations	1x/week (10-15 hours)	City Manager ends based on daily supply and demand of water
Stage 2	320 MGD for one day	Reduce water use by 15% of 320 MGD	Drought Response Stage Two Regulations	1x/week (10-15 hours)	City Manager ends based on daily supply and demand of water

Inflow Trigger					
Stage	Trigger	Goal	Action <sup>a</sup>	Irrigation Restriction <sup>a</sup>	End Condition
Stage 2	Combined lake storage between 1.1 MAF – 900,000 AF Inflows less than 25% of historic average <sup>c</sup>	Reduce water use by 20%	Drought Response Stage Two Regulations	1x/week (10-15 hours)	Combined storage reaches 1.1 MAF and projected to stay above 900,000 AF for four months <sup>b</sup>

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**Table 2. Demand, Supply and Emergency Triggers (continued)**

Capacity Triggers					
Stage	Trigger	Goal	Action <sup>a</sup>	Irrigation Restriction <sup>a</sup>	End Condition
Stage 1	Combined lake storage falls below 1.4 MAF	Reduce water use by 10%	Drought Response Stage One Regulations	1x/week (13 hours automatic) 2x/week (30 hours hose-end)	Combined storage reaches 1.4 MAF and expected to remain above 1.4 MAF for four months
Stage 2	Combined lake storage falls below 900,000 AF	Reduce water use by 20%	Drought Response Stage Two Regulations	1x/week (10-15 hours)	Combined storage reaches 1.1 MAF and projected to stay above 900,000 AF for four months <sup>b</sup>
Stage 3	Combined lake storage falls below 750,000 AF	Reduce water use by 25%	Drought Response Stage Three Regulations	1x/week (10-15 hours)	Combined storage reaches 900,000 AF and projected to stay above 750,000 AF for four months <sup>b</sup>
Stage 4	Combined lake storage falls below 600,000 AF or a drought worse than the drought of record is declared	Reduce water use by a minimum of 30% from a baseline approved by LCRA, which may account for City's conservation measures	Drought Response Stage Four Regulations or Additional Restrictions as necessary to meet pro-rata curtailment requirements	1x/week (6 hours)	City Manager determines that conditions no longer require meeting mandatory curtailment targets; combined storage expected to remain above 600,000 AF for four months
Emergency Stage 5	As determined by City Manager, system outage, equipment failure, contamination of water source or other emergencies	Reduce water use to levels deemed necessary	Emergency Stage Four Regulations or Additional Restrictions	Prohibited	City Manager ends based on daily water demand or the end of supply constraints

<sup>a</sup> Detailed information about watering schedules and additional conservation measures for each stage can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>b</sup> The City Manager may also end regulations based on other conditions or circumstances which merit such action.

<sup>c</sup> Inflow triggers will be checked on March 1 and July 1. If the previous three-months average inflows fall below 25% of the historic average for the same three-month period, the triggers will be enacted.

Procedures for granting variances to the watering regulations are outlined in Austin's Water Conservation Code and may be authorized if deemed necessary to safeguard public health and safety. Violations are subject to both criminal and administrative penalties as stipulated in City Code, Chapter 2-13. Additional requirements are incorporated within the Water Conservation Code, detailed in City Code Chapter 6-4, and in rules adopted pursuant to that chapter.

## Section IV: Drought Response Measures

Within each drought stage, Austin Water will enforce specific regulations, including outdoor watering restrictions. Additionally, Austin Water may undertake further discretionary non-regulatory water-saving measures, depending on the need and available resources, to encourage and assist residents and businesses in conserving water. The following tables outline the watering and other regulations cited in Chapter 6-4, as well as the non-regulatory measures that Austin Water may implement at each drought stage.

### Drought Response Stage 1

Outdoor Watering Restrictions	
<b>Automatic Irrigation</b>	Once per week (13-hours total) Midnight – 8:00 a.m. / 7:00 p.m. – midnight Assigned weekday
<b>Hose End</b>	Twice per week (30-hours total) Midnight – 10:00 a.m. / 7:00 p.m. - midnight Assigned weekday and weekend day

Additional Code Measures	
<b>Regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No water waste.</li> <li>2. No midday watering.</li> <li>3. Restaurants serve water on request.</li> <li>4. Cooling tower efficiency requirements and annual assessment.</li> <li>5. Commercial irrigation evaluation every two years.</li> <li>6. Car washing equipment certified annually.</li> <li>7. Charity car washes held at commercial car washes.</li> <li>8. Home car washing must use positive shutoff valve.</li> <li>9. Patio misters may not operate at commercial facility except between 4 p.m. and midnight.</li> <li>10. Power washers use efficient equipment.</li> <li>11. Ornamental fountains must recirculate.</li> </ol>
<b>Variances</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Threat to primary source of income.</li> <li>2. Documented environmental requirement.</li> <li>3. Large property (unable to irrigate property during Conservation Stage).</li> <li>4. Medical hardship.</li> <li>5. Xeriscaping establishment.</li> <li>6. Alternative compliance.</li> </ol>

Additional Code Measures (continued)	
<b>Exemptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of public health, safety and welfare.</li> <li>2. Auxiliary water.</li> <li>3. Repair of water distribution lines.</li> <li>4. Testing and repair of irrigation systems.</li> <li>5. Hand watering any day any time or with refillable receptacle.</li> <li>6. Drip irrigation.</li> <li>7. Tree watering with automatic bubbler or soaker hose.</li> <li>8. Water use necessary for permit requirements including the establishment of new landscaping.</li> <li>9. Washing of garbage and food handling trucks.</li> <li>10. Athletic fields.</li> <li>11. Fire suppression.</li> <li>12. Irrigation of plant stock at commercial nursery.</li> <li>13. Watering commercially applied herbicide or pesticide.</li> </ol>

Discretionary Non-Regulatory Measures	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand temporary enforcement staff during irrigation season.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced marketing of drought-related information to the public.</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced outreach to other City departments to implement water conservation audits/projects.</li> <li>• Increase rebate amounts for select conservation programs.</li> <li>• Increase incentives for voluntary connection to centralized reclaimed water system.</li> </ul>

## Drought Response Stage 2

Outdoor Watering Restrictions	
<b>Automatic Irrigation</b>	Once per week (10-hours total) Midnight – 5:00 a.m. / 7:000 p.m. – midnight Assigned weekday
<b>Hose End</b>	Once per week (15-hours total) Midnight – 10:00 a.m. / 7:00 p.m. - midnight Assigned weekend day

Additional Code Measures	
<b>Regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No water waste.</li> <li>2. No midday watering.</li> <li>3. Restaurants serve water on request.</li> <li>4. Cooling tower efficiency requirements and annual assessment.</li> <li>5. Commercial irrigation evaluation every two years.</li> <li>6. Car washing equipment certified annually.</li> <li>7. Charity car washes prohibited.</li> <li>8. Home car washing must use single fill receptacle.</li> <li>9. Patio misters may not operate at commercial facility except between 4 p.m. and midnight.</li> <li>10. Power washers use efficient equipment.</li> <li>11. Ornamental fountains must recirculate.</li> <li>12. Ornamental fountains with a 4-inch emission or fall of water are prohibited, unless to preserve aquatic life.</li> <li>13. Golf course fairways irrigated on designated outdoor water use day; tees and greens irrigated every other day with notice to Austin Water.</li> </ol>
<b>Variances</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Threat to primary source of income.</li> <li>2. Documented environmental requirement.</li> <li>3. Large property (<i>unable to irrigate property during Conservation Stage</i>).</li> <li>4. Medical hardship.</li> <li>5. Xeriscaping establishment.</li> <li>6. Alternative compliance.</li> </ol>

<b>Exemptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of public health, safety and welfare.</li> <li>2. Auxiliary water.</li> <li>3. Repair of water distribution lines.</li> <li>4. Testing and repair of irrigation systems.</li> <li>5. Hand watering any day any time or with refillable receptacle.</li> <li>6. Drip irrigation.</li> <li>7. Tree watering with automatic bubbler or soaker hose.</li> <li>8. Water use necessary for permit requirements including the establishment of new landscaping.</li> <li>9. Washing of garbage and food handling trucks.</li> <li>10. Athletic fields.</li> <li>11. Fire suppression.</li> <li>12. Irrigation of plant stock at commercial nursery.</li> <li>13. Watering commercially applied herbicide or pesticide.</li> </ol>
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<b>Discretionary Non-Regulatory Measures</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand temporary enforcement staff during irrigation season.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced marketing of drought-related information to the public.</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced outreach to other City departments to implement water conservation audits/projects.</li> <li>• Increase rebate amounts for select conservation programs.</li> <li>• Increase incentives for voluntary connection to centralized reclaimed water system.</li> </ul>

### Drought Response Stage 3

Outdoor Watering Restrictions	
<b>Automatic Irrigation</b>	Once per week (10-hours total) Midnight – 5:00 a.m. / 7:00 p.m. - midnight Assigned weekday
<b>Hose End</b>	Once per week (15-hours total) Midnight – 10:00 a.m. / 7:00 p.m. - midnight Assigned weekend day

Additional Code Measures	
<b>Regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No water waste.</li> <li>2. No midday watering.</li> <li>3. Restaurants serve water on request.</li> <li>4. Cooling tower efficiency requirements and annual assessment.</li> <li>5. Commercial irrigation evaluation every two years.</li> <li>6. Car washing equipment certified.</li> <li>7. Charity car washes prohibited.</li> <li>8. Home car washing must use single fill receptacle.</li> <li>9. Patio misters may not operate at commercial facility except between 4 p.m. and midnight.</li> <li>10. Power washers use efficient equipment.</li> <li>11. Ornamental fountains must recirculate.</li> <li>12. Ornamental fountains with a 4-inch emission or fall of water are prohibited, unless to preserve aquatic life.</li> <li>13. Golf course fairways irrigated on designated outdoor water use day; tees and greens irrigated every other day with notice to Austin Water.</li> </ol>

Additional Code Measures (continued)	
<b>Variances</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Threat to primary source of income.</li> <li>2. Documented environmental requirement.</li> <li>3. Large property (unable to irrigate property during Conservation Stage).</li> <li>4. Medical hardship.</li> <li>5. Xeriscaping establishment.</li> <li>6. Alternative Compliance.</li> <li>7. Athletic Fields.</li> </ol>
<b>Exemptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of public health, safety and welfare.</li> <li>2. Auxiliary water.</li> <li>3. Repair of water distribution lines.</li> <li>4. Testing and repair of irrigation systems.</li> <li>5. Hand watering any day any time or with refillable receptacle.</li> <li>6. Drip irrigation.</li> <li>7. Tree watering with automatic bubbler or soaker hose.</li> <li>8. Water use necessary for permit requirements including the establishment of new landscaping.</li> <li>9. Washing of garbage and food handling trucks.</li> <li>10. Fire suppression.</li> <li>11. Irrigation of plant stock at commercial nursery.</li> <li>12. Watering commercially applied herbicide or pesticide.</li> </ol>

Discretionary Non-Regulatory Measures	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand temporary enforcement staff during irrigation season.</li> <li>• No warning for irrigation water waste violations, but dismissal with completion of an irrigation course.</li> <li>• Drought Rate Surcharge of \$1.00 per thousand gallons of water billed.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced marketing of drought-related information to the public.</li> <li>• Expanded voluntary water budgeting outreach through the My ATX Water portal.</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced outreach to other City departments to implement water conservation audits/projects.</li> <li>• Increase rebate amounts for select conservation programs.</li> <li>• Increase incentives for voluntary connection to centralized reclaimed water system.</li> </ul>

## Drought Response Stage 4

Outdoor Watering Restrictions	
<b>Automatic Irrigation</b>	<u>Functional turf areas and beds only</u> Once per week (6-hours total) Midnight – 6:00 a.m. Assigned weekday
<b>Hose End</b>	<u>Functional turf areas and beds only</u> Once per week (15-hours total) 7 a.m. - 10 a.m. / 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Assigned weekend day

Additional Code Measures	
<b>Regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No water waste.</li> <li>2. No midday watering.</li> <li>3. No watering nonfunctional turf (except for hand watering)</li> <li>4. Suspend approval of irrigation permits.</li> <li>5. Suspend approval of single-family residential pool permits.</li> <li>6. Restaurants serve water on request.</li> <li>7. Cooling tower efficiency requirements and annual assessment.</li> <li>8. Commercial irrigation evaluation every two years.</li> <li>9. Car washing equipment must be certified.</li> <li>10. Charity car washes prohibited.</li> <li>11. Home car washing must use positive shutoff valve.</li> <li>12. Patio misters may not operate at commercial facility except between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.</li> <li>13. Power washers use efficient equipment.</li> <li>14. Ornamental fountains must recirculate.</li> <li>15. Ornamental fountains with a 4-inch emission or fall of water are prohibited.</li> <li>16. Golf course fairways irrigated on designated outdoor water use day; tees and greens irrigated every other day with notice to Austin Water.</li> <li>17. The filling of spas is prohibited.</li> <li>18. Operation of splash pads during limited hours.</li> </ol>
<b>Variances</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Threat to primary source of income.</li> <li>2. Documented environmental requirement.</li> <li>3. Large property (unable to irrigate property during Conservation Stage).</li> <li>4. Medical hardship.</li> <li>5. Xeriscaping establishment.</li> <li>6. Alternative Compliance.</li> <li>7. Athletic fields.</li> </ol>

Additional Code Measures (continued)	
<b>Exemptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of public health, safety and welfare.</li> <li>2. Auxiliary water.</li> <li>3. Repair of water distribution lines.</li> <li>4. Testing and repair of irrigation systems.</li> <li>5. Hand watering any day any time or with refillable receptacle.</li> <li>6. Drip irrigation.</li> <li>7. Tree watering with automatic bubbler or soaker hose.</li> <li>8. Water use necessary for permit requirements including the establishment of new landscaping.</li> <li>9. Washing of garbage and food handling trucks.</li> <li>10. Fire suppression.</li> <li>11. Irrigation of plant stock at commercial nursery.</li> <li>12. Watering commercially applied herbicide or pesticide.</li> </ol>

Discretionary Non-Regulatory Measures	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand temporary enforcement staff during irrigation season.</li> <li>• Allow for dismissal of first violation with completion of an irrigation course.</li> <li>• Drought Rate Surcharge of \$3.00 per thousand gallons of water billed.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced marketing of drought-related information to the public.</li> <li>• Expanded voluntary water budgeting outreach through the My ATX Water portal.</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced outreach to other City departments to implement water conservation audits/projects.</li> <li>• Increase rebate amounts for select conservation programs.</li> <li>• Increase incentives for voluntary connection to centralized reclaimed water system.</li> </ul>

## Emergency Stage 5

Irrigation & Additional Code Measures	
<b>Regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No irrigation of vegetation outdoors.</li> <li>2. Mandatory water budgeting.</li> <li>3. Suspend approval of new irrigation permits.</li> <li>4. Suspend approval of new single-family pool permits.</li> <li>5. No washing of vehicles or mobile equipment.</li> <li>6. No operation of fountains unless necessary to preserve aquatic life.</li> <li>7. No adding of water to swimming pool, pond, fountain or spa.</li> <li>8. No operation of splash pads or other similar recreational use of water (including Slip 'N Slide).</li> <li>9. No washing of outdoor surfaces.</li> <li>10. No operation of patio misters.</li> <li>11. No watering of chemical lawn applications unless authorized in a variance.</li> <li>12. No foundation watering.</li> </ol>
<b>Variances</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Threat to primary source of income.</li> <li>2. Documented environmental requirement.</li> <li>3. Foundation watering.</li> <li>4. Athletic field irrigation when necessary to protect the health of the players.</li> <li>5. Watering in of prescribed tree disease treatment chemicals or pesticide.</li> <li>6. Alternative Compliance.</li> </ol>
<b>Exemptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of public health, safety and welfare.</li> <li>2. Auxiliary water.</li> <li>3. Repair of water distribution lines.</li> <li>4. Water use necessary for permit requirements, except for landscaping establishment.</li> <li>5. Washing of garbage and food handling trucks.</li> <li>6. Fire suppression.</li> </ol>

Discretionary Non-Regulatory Measures	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand temporary enforcement staff during irrigation season only if storage capacity driven declaration.</li> <li>• No warning for irrigation water waste violations, but dismissal with completion of an irrigation course.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced marketing of drought-related information to the public.</li> <li>• Expanded voluntary water budgeting outreach through the My ATX Water portal.</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced outreach to other City departments to implement water conservation audits/projects.</li> <li>• Increase rebate amounts for select conservation programs.</li> <li>• Increase incentives for voluntary connection to centralized reclaimed water system.</li> </ul>

## Section V: Wholesale Contract Provisions

New wholesale contracts incorporate standard language mandating adherence to the City's Water Conservation Code. Typically, customers entering new wholesale contracts are also obligated to establish a water conservation program like the one administered by the City. For customers with older contracts lacking water conservation provisions, voluntary implementation of similar water conservation measures is requested, and AW worked with each organization to assist with conservation outreach and shared AW materials and guidelines.

Pro-rata curtailment will be conducted in accordance with Texas Water Code §11.039. Additionally, all new, renewed, or extended wholesale supply contracts will include a provision stipulating that water distribution will occur on a pro-rata basis in the event of a water shortage resulting from drought.

Enforcement actions for non-compliance with either the Water Conservation Code or pro-rata water reductions by wholesale customers will be determined based on the specifics outlined in each wholesale customer's contract.

## Section VI: Public Involvement

Austin Water solicited input on this Plan update from both retail and wholesale water customers, as well as identified key stakeholder groups. Throughout the engagement process, Austin Water sought feedback for the development of revisions to the existing Water Conservation Code related to drought management using various methods:

- Utilizing advertising opportunities and multiple social media platforms to encourage feedback.
- Sending direct email notifications and meeting invites to key stakeholders.
- Conducting two surveys aimed at collecting public input on five potential additions to drought stage regulations, as well as gathering open feedback. One survey was accessible on the Drought Contingency Plan SpeakUpAustin page (with 67 respondents). The second survey was randomly emailed to Austin Water customers (with 43 respondents). Results from both surveys showed similar responses. Overall, a substantial majority supported the proposed additions to drought stage regulations. Refer to Appendix F for combined survey responses.
- Delivering presentations at meetings of the Water Forward Task Force, as well as other City advisory boards such as the Water and Wastewater Commission and the Resource Management Commission. Resolutions supporting the Plan from these advisory boards can be found in Appendix D.

## **Section VII: Public Notification and Education**

The City will disseminate information about the Plan to both its wholesale and retail water customers, including details about the conditions triggering each stage of the Plan and the corresponding drought response measures. This information will be distributed through various channels, such as press releases, newspaper advertisements, updates on the city's website, social media posts, presentations to community organizations and neighborhood groups, meetings with wholesale customers, and other appropriate outreach methods. Additionally, water conservation-related public information materials, including brochures and program information, will be made available to wholesale water customers for distribution to their retail customers.

The City will also notify the public of upcoming drought stage changes using the same communication methods and advertisements. The scope of these notifications will expand with each elevated drought stage. Additionally, marketing efforts will highlight increased rebate payments available during each drought stage.

## **Section VIII: Coordination with Regional Planning Groups (RPG)**

The City of Austin has provided a copy of this Plan to the Lower Colorado Regional Planning Group (Region K). A copy of the transmittal letter is included in Appendix F.

## **Section IX: TCEQ Notification**

The City will notify the executive director of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality within five business days of implementing any mandatory provisions of the Drought Contingency Plan.

## **Section X: Plan Review and Updates**

This Plan was developed to fulfill the requirements outlined in 30 TAC § 288.20 and § 288.22, which mandate the submission of a Drought Contingency Plan and provision of essential drought contingency response information, regulations, and services to the community and water customers. The Plan will undergo review at least every five years and will be updated as necessary based on significant developments in Austin's water service area. The next scheduled plan review will take place in 2029.

## APPENDIX A: Water Conservation Code

**Paste updated 6-4 language once adopted**

DRAFT

## **APPENDIX B: Water Conservation Penalty Code**

**Paste updated 2-13 language once adopted**

**DRAFT**

## **APPENDIX C: Water Use Triggers for Water Use Management Ordinance**

**UPDATE ONCE AVAILIBLE**

**DRAFT**

## **APPENDIX D: Resolutions in Support of Adoption of the Drought Contingency Plan**

**Water & Wastewater Commission**

**Resource Management Commission**

**UPDATE ONCE AVAILABLE**

**DRAFT**

## **APPENDIX E: Resolution Adopting the 2024 Drought Contingency Plan**

**UPDATE ONCE AVAILABLE**

**DRAFT**

## **APPENDIX F: Transmittal Letter to Regional Planning Group**

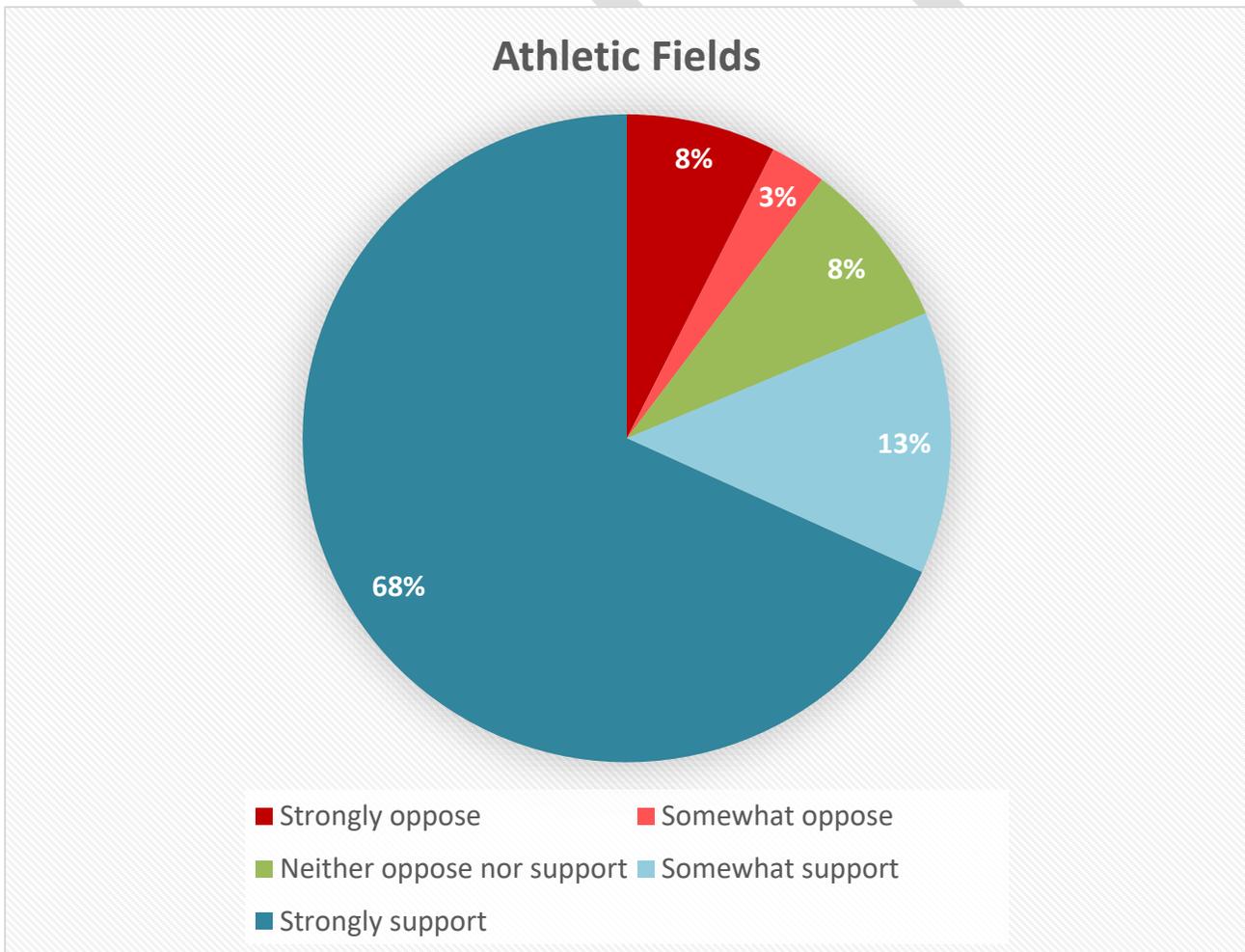
**UPDATE ONCE AVAILABLE**

**DRAFT**

## APPENDIX F: Public Response to November 2023 Survey

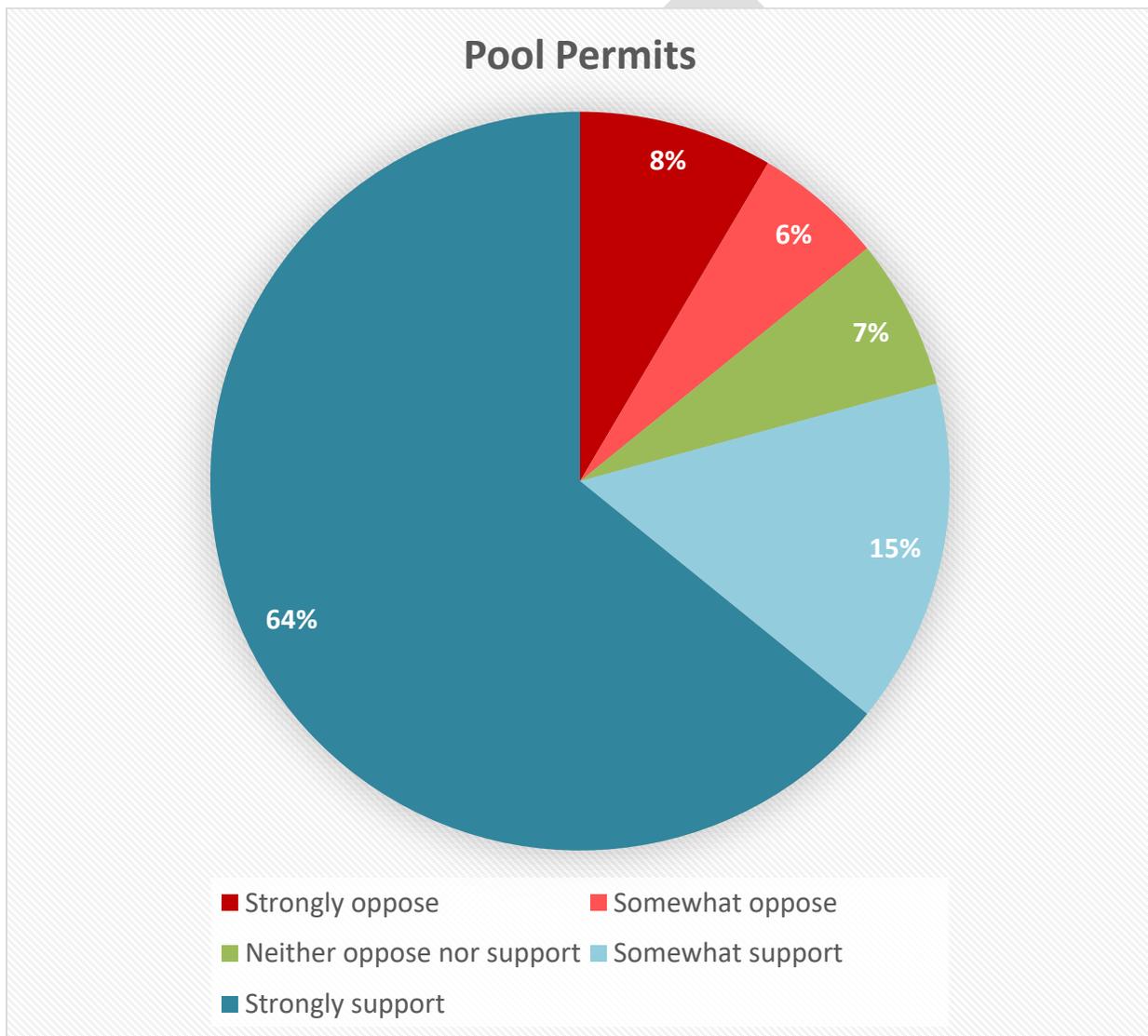
PROPOSED CHANGE: Remove athletic field irrigation exemption for Drought Response Stage 2 and above. Currently there are no day or time restrictions for athletic field watering, regardless of drought stage. This change proposes that in times of serious drought, athletic fields can only water on the one-day per week schedule unless they have an approved variance.

Athletic Fields		
Strongly oppose	8	7.5%
Somewhat oppose	3	2.8%
Neither oppose nor support	9	8.4%
Somewhat support	14	13.1%
Strongly support	73	68.2%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>107</b>	



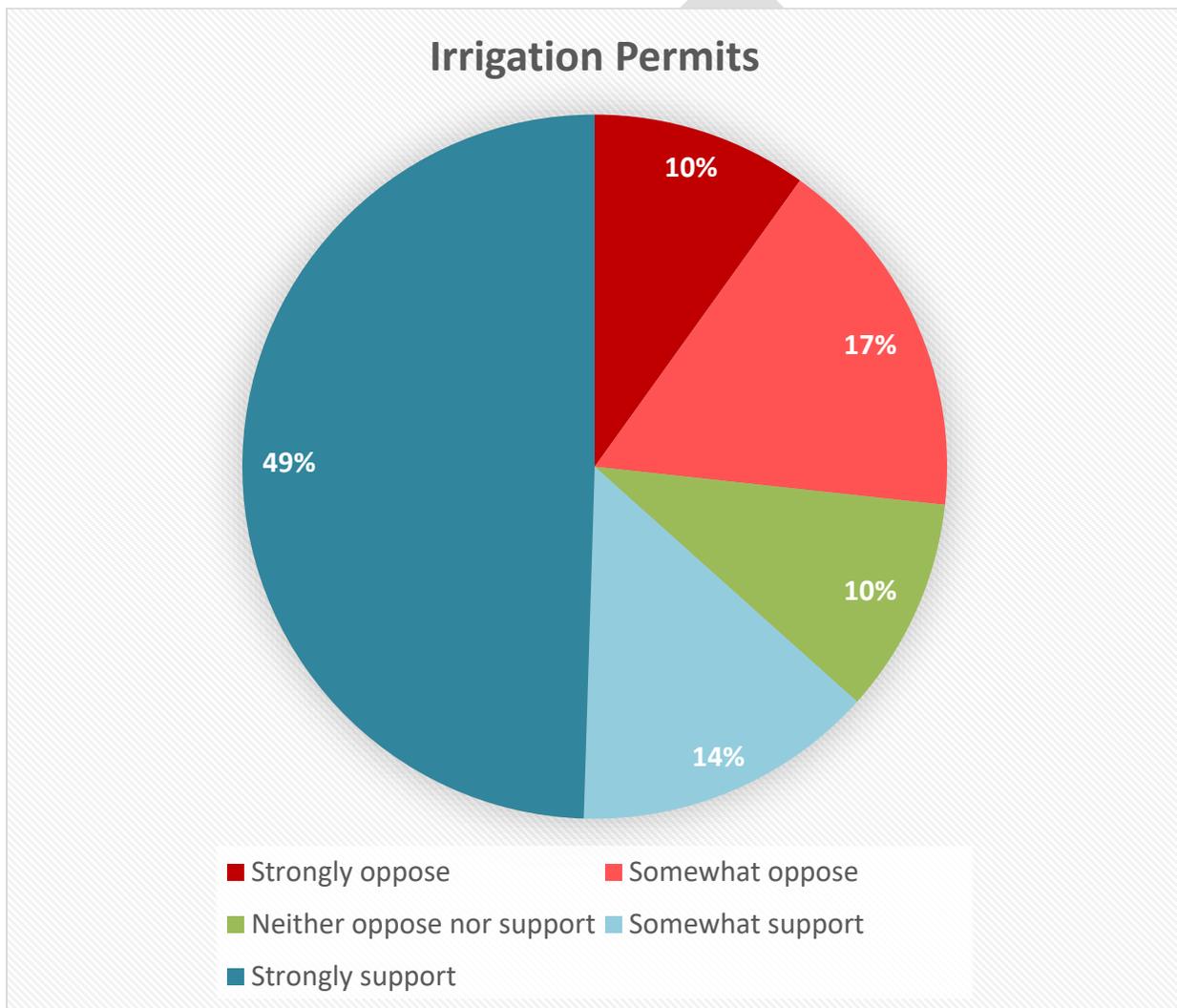
PROPOSED CHANGE: Pause on approving new single-family pool permits. During Drought Stage 4 or emergency water restrictions, the City of Austin would temporarily pause issuing permits for new pools until the return to Drought Stage 3 or lower.

Pool Permits		
Strongly oppose	9	8.5%
Somewhat oppose	6	5.7%
Neither oppose nor support	7	6.6%
Somewhat support	16	15.1%
Strongly support	68	64.2%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>106</b>	



PROPOSED CHANGE: Pause on approving new irrigation permits. During Drought Stage 4 or emergency water restrictions, the City of Austin would temporarily pause issuing permits for new irrigation systems until the return to Drought Stage 3 or lower.

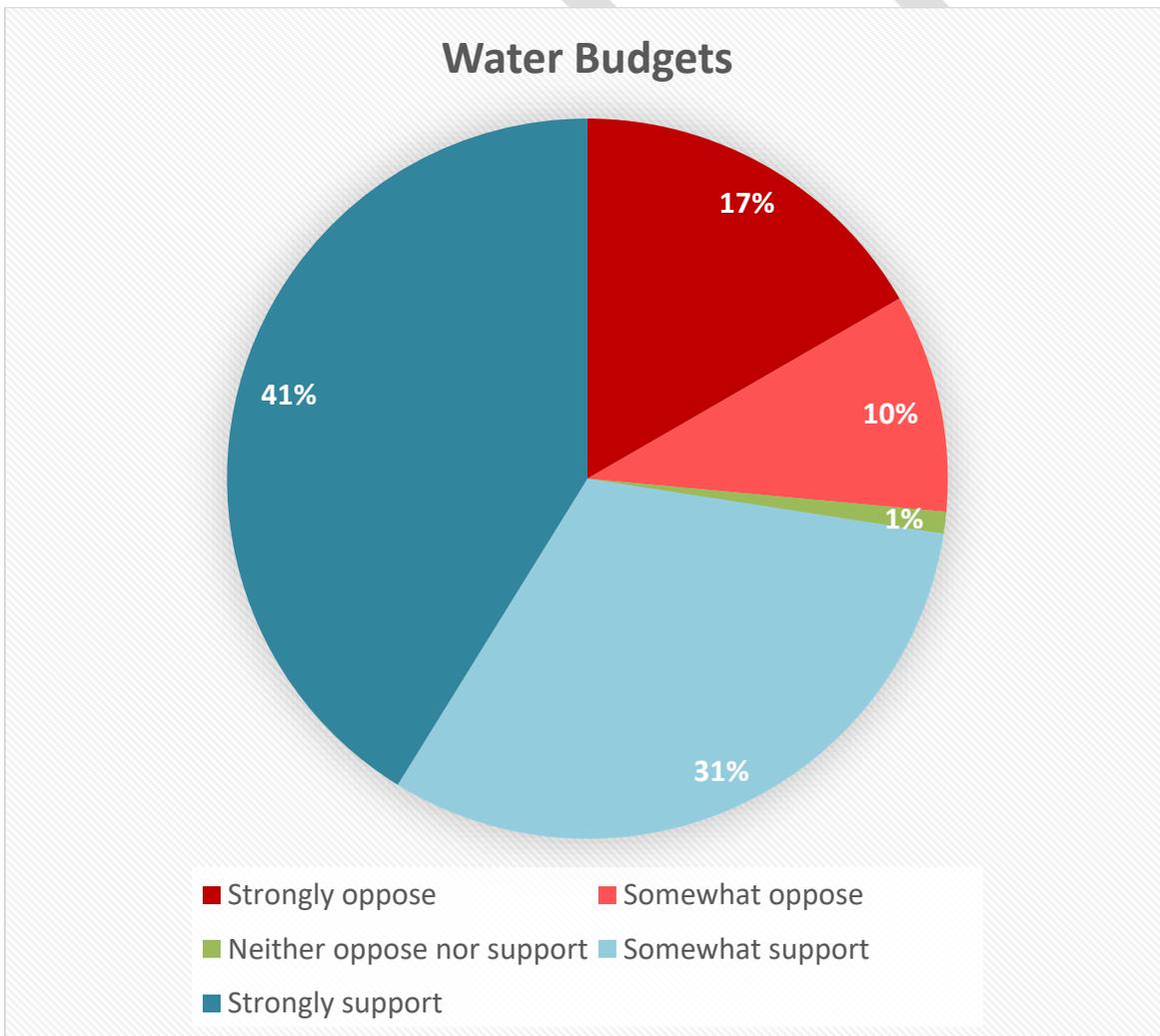
Irrigation Permits		
Strongly oppose	10	9.9%
Somewhat oppose	17	16.8%
Neither oppose nor support	10	9.9%
Somewhat support	14	13.9%
Strongly support	50	49.5%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>101</b>	



**PROPOSED CHANGE:** Mandatory water budgeting. During Drought Stage 4 and emergency water restrictions, residential, multi-family, commercial and industrial customers would be subject to mandatory water budgets. Those who go over their water budget amounts would be given an initial warning, followed by a possible penalty.

Austin Water did not recommend this proposed change due to logistical barriers of implementing and operating mandatory water budgets at this time.

<b>Water Budgets</b>		
Strongly oppose	17	16.7%
Somewhat oppose	10	9.8%
Neither oppose nor support	1	1.0%
Somewhat support	32	31.4%
Strongly support	42	41.2%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>102</b>	



**PROPOSED CHANGE:** Suspend requirement for new landscaping at newly constructed buildings in order to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy once we enter into Drought Response Stage 3 and above. When our water supply falls below 37% newly built properties can post a bond instead of installing new landscaping. Builders would have to wait until a return to Drought Stage 2 or lower to establish landscapes.

Austin Water did not recommend this proposed change due to the risk of market fluctuations between the point of bond and a property being allowed to install new landscape could lead to the bond no longer being sufficient to cover the cost of installation.

Landscape Bond		
Strongly oppose	10	9.3%
Somewhat oppose	7	6.5%
Neither oppose nor support	7	6.5%
Somewhat support	27	25.0%
Strongly support	57	52.8%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>108</b>	

