



# Water Conservation Program Updates

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April 11, 2019

# Presentation Summary

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- University of Chicago (UChicago) Pilot Program Review
- Post-Pilot Impact
- DPU's Response
- Next Steps

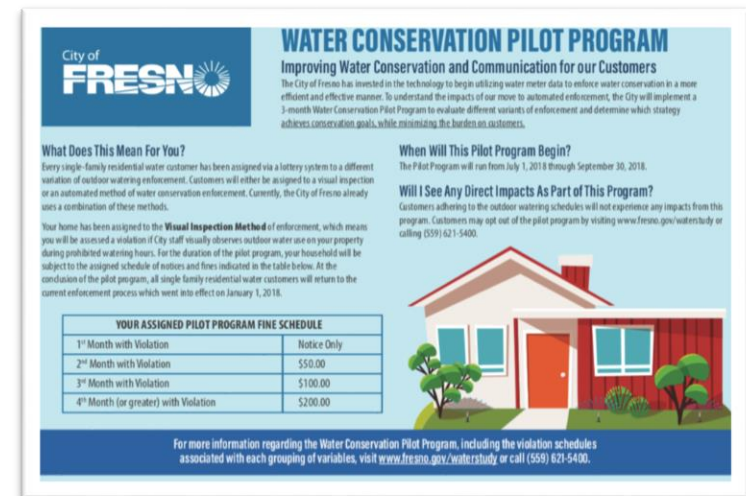
# UChicago Pilot Program: Overview

## GOAL:

Determine which enforcement strategy achieves mandatory conservation goals, while minimizing the customer fine burden

## QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED:

1. Does automated enforcement increase conservation (vs. visual enforcement)?
2. Can lower fines still be effective at promoting conservation?



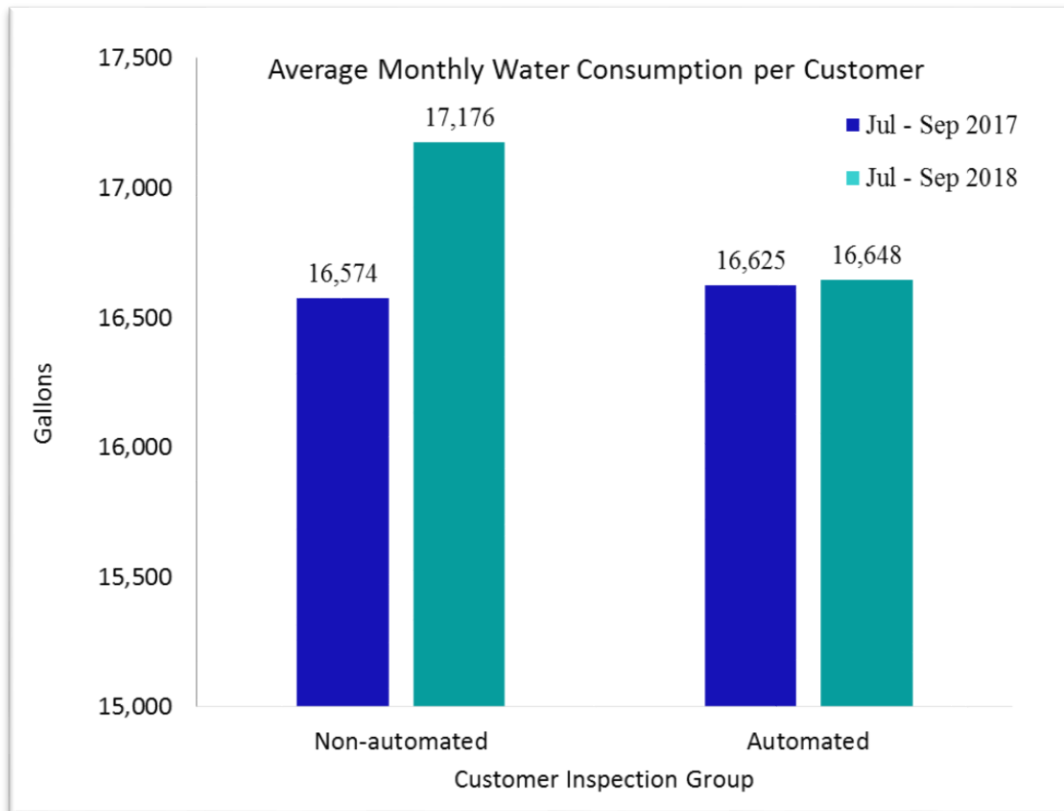
*Front Side of Postcard  
Mailed to Customers, July 2018*

# Pilot Program Takeaway #1:

## Reduction in customers' overall daily water use

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**Automated enforcement significantly improved water conservation compared to visual enforcement**



- From 2017 to 2018, average monthly water consumption per customer increased 3.6% for customers in the visual enforcement group, but only 0.1% in the automated enforcement group.
- From 2017 to 2018, water consumption in the visual enforcement group increased by an average of **579 gallons more** water per month than those in the automated enforcement group

# Pilot Program Takeaway #2:

## Compliance with Regulations: Automated vs. Visual Enforcement

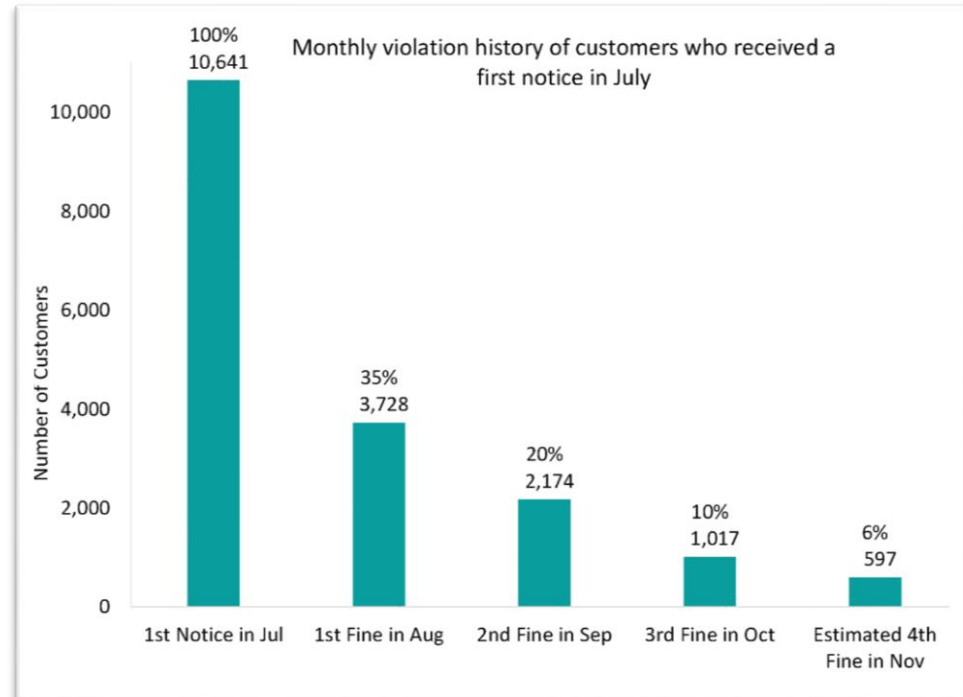
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### During pilot period (July – September):

- 2,408 notices – automated enforcement group
- 20 notices – visual enforcement group

### Customers changed behavior after receiving notices:

- Of customers who received a first notice in July, 65% had no violations the following month
- Only 10% of these customers received a third fine

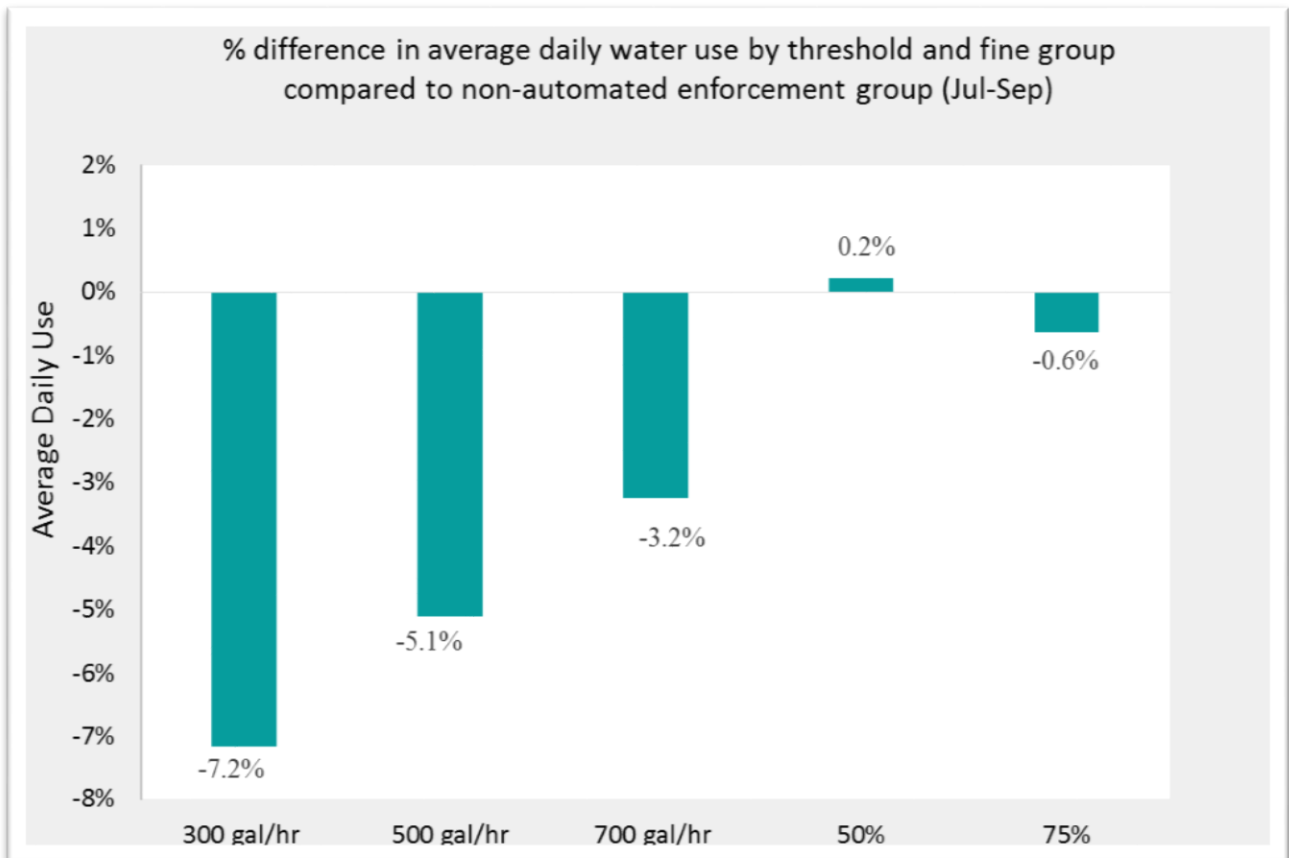




# Pilot Program Takeaway #3:

## Compliance with Regulations: Reduced Fines

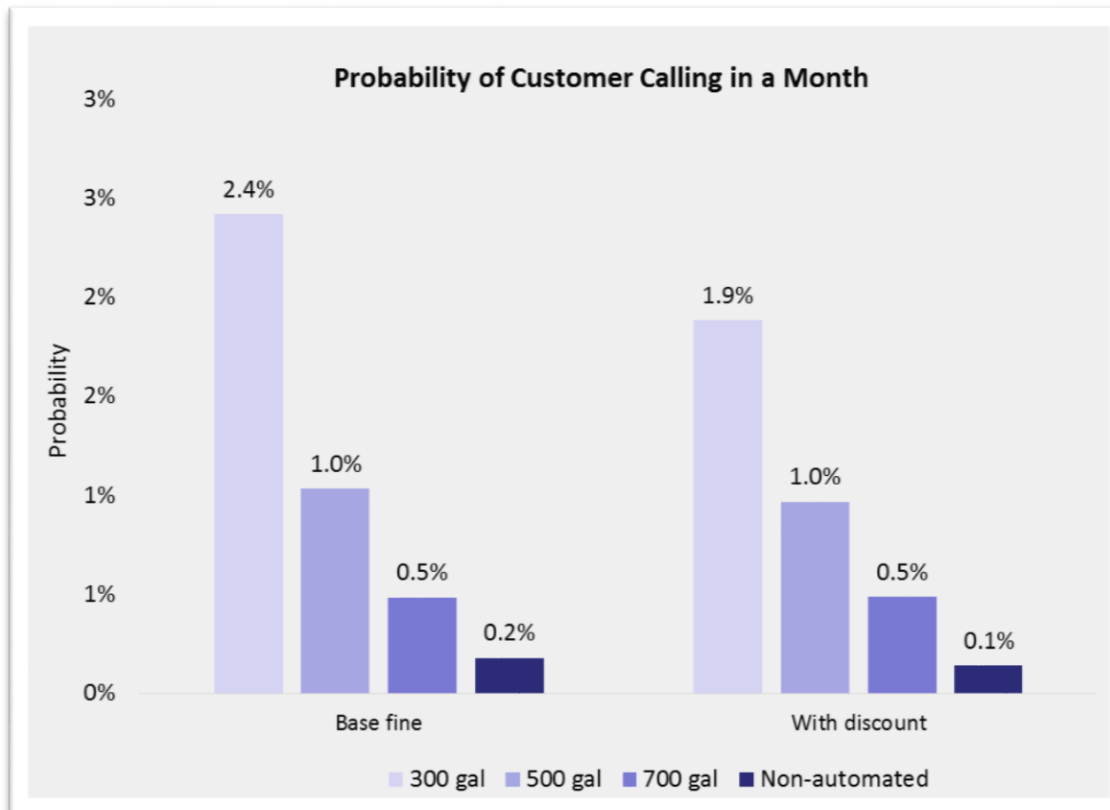
**Fine discounts had little effect on water conservation, as compared to thresholds.**



# Pilot Program Takeaway #4:

## Number of Phone Calls and Complaints Received

During pilot period, call volume averaged 3,488 calls per month.



- Customers in automated enforcement group (especially with stricter thresholds) were 7 times more likely to contact Water Conservation
- Customers with fine discounts were less likely to call, but this effect was smaller than usage threshold restrictions

# Moratorium on Fines

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## Concerns about customer service staffing levels related to incoming customer calls.

- In October, when pilot ended and automated enforcement was used for all customers, call volume spiked to 7,500 calls
- During the pilot program, 55% of customers were under visual enforcement; these were subject to automated enforcement upon conclusion of the pilot.
- Field staff was brought into the office and staff was borrowed from other work groups to assist with incoming calls

### **November 1, 2018:**

City Council approved Resolution No. 2018-253 implementing a moratorium on fines for violations of water regulations until further Council direction



### **UPDATE TO WATER CONSERVATION POLICY**

On November 1, 2018, the Fresno City Council passed a moratorium on fines related to excessive water use. Any fines for excessive water use violations incurred after October 1, 2018, **will not be enforced** until further notice. Customers who have received a fine on their utility bill for an October violation will receive a credit on an upcoming bill.

Customers will continue to receive notification for excessive water use violations; however associated fines will not be imposed.

This policy will remain in place until further notice.

Contact the Utilities Billing & Collection Division at (559) 621-6888 with questions.



# Program Review

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**Key staff evaluated the results of the pilot program and all aspects of the Water Conservation Program to determine what changes might be made and identified 3 Water Conservation goals:**

- 1** Meet the Urban Water Management Plan 2020 conservation goal
- 2** Comply with all local and state laws and regulations
- 3** Deliver professional, courteous customer service and water conservation education to the public

**A number of changes to water conservation regulations are recommended to meet all three of these goals**

# Summary of Proposed Updates

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- 1 Simplified Outdoor Water Use Schedule**

Stage 2 revised to mirror other stages with only two changes per year
- 2 Extended Morning Outdoor Water Use Hours**

Outdoor water use permitted until 10:00 AM and after 6:00 PM on permitted days
- 3 Updated “Excessive Water Use” Definition**
  - Water usage threshold adjusts based on stages of the Water Shortage Contingency Plan
  - One day per month of noncompliant use without consequence of enforcement, to accommodate any inadvertent errors, accidental use, leaks, or other anomalies
  - Stage 2 Excessive Water Use set at 400 gallons per hour, which offers more flexibility to customers.
- 4 50% Water Waste Penalty Reduction**
- 5 More Clearly-Defined Exemptions to the Regular Outdoor Water Use Schedule**
  - Long-term (annual) exemptions with alternate schedule
  - Short-term exemptions
- 6 Streamlined and Updated Appeal Process**
  - Complies with new state regulations
  - Customers may appeal to City’s Administrative Hearing Officer



# Operations Plan

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## Phased Approach

- **“FIX NOT FINE” approach**
  - Not to make money, but to change customer behavior to allow the City to comply with its mandates and goals
- Focus resources on the highest non-compliant water use first, then address others as possible
- Allows staff to meet Water Conservation Program's #3 goal:  
*Deliver professional, courteous customer service and water conservation education to the public*
- Maintains staff availability to assist with customer education and provision of service





# Education and Outreach Messaging

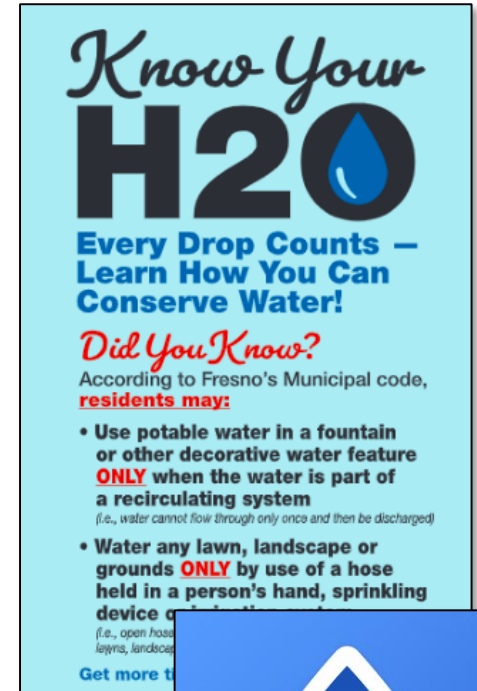
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# Primary Messaging Initiatives

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- 1 General Water Conservation Messaging**
  - #KnowYourH2O: tips to help customers better understand water use and regulations
- 2 Changes to Water Conservation Regulations**
  - Outdoor Water Use Schedule, excessive water use limits, etc.
- 3 EyeOnWater App**
  - Increase customer awareness of tool
- 4 Water Use Permit Availability (Advance Notice)**
  - Solar panel cleaning, special event, other bona fide use



# Moving Forward

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# Next Steps

- Begin education and outreach efforts
- Continue sending courtesy notices for **automated** enforcement through April 2020
  - Allows for customers to fully understand their water use
  - Allows City staff to ensure performance of automated system
- Visual enforcement will remain status quo, including assessment of fines as necessary
- May 1, 2020 – begin full automated enforcement, including assessment of fines as necessary
  - Using phased approach identified in Operations Plan

# Action Items

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## **Recommend City Council Approval of All Items:**

- Ordinance amending Sections 6-501 and 6-520 of the Fresno Municipal Code relating to regulations for Urban Water Conservation and Excessive Water Use
- Resolution to amend the Water Shortage Contingency Plan
- Resolution to amend the Master Fee Resolution adopting the new schedule of fines associated with Urban Water Conservation and Excessive Water Use
- Addendum to a Negative Declaration prepared for Environmental Assessment No. EA-17-014



City of

**FRESNO**

