

Case Study

Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis Rewards Conservation Efforts

Water conservation is a hot topic for many municipalities. The city of Minneapolis and surrounding metropolitan areas are offering incentives through Metropolitan Council Environmental Services to apartments and condos participating in conservation efforts. Credits are granted to complexes showing a reduction in wastewater usage.

One program already in place is the Service Availability Charge (SAC) which generates revenues to help support capital investments in wastewater and treatment systems. Fees are imposed for new connections or increased capacity demand. The current per-unit SAC implemented by the Metropolitan Council allows credits for apartments and condominiums using common area laundry rooms, offsetting the basic fees imposed.

The initial SAC rate for each dwelling is \$1,350. Apartments and condos receive a 20% reduction if there is no plumbing for in-unit laundry facilities. Units subsidized under any government program for low or moderate income can receive an additional 25% rate reduction. Since these rates are additive, this could translate to a 45% savings or \$608 for each dwelling! As of 2003, 56 apartment complexes in the Twin Cities metro area had qualified for one of these water-saving discounts.

Although water fee discounts began in the 1980's, recent initiatives have strengthened this push for conservation. The Council has in-acted the *2030 Regional Development Framework* for the Twin Cities area growth and development. Efficiency, flexibility and cooperation are at the heart of this initiative, adopted Jan. 14 by the Council.

"Different communities have different opportunities, needs and aspirations. *Framework* reflects the belief that communities have a shared responsibility to help accommodate the region's growth in a sensible, cost-effective manner." said Council Chair Peter Bell.

The 17-member Council, appointed last year by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, took time in their first year to review, discuss and take public comment on the document. A main focus of the program is the protection of natural resources through integration of natural-resource conservation strategies. It emphasizes protection and management of the regions water resources.

Through the use of the SAC discounts, the Twin Cities metro area is making a community conservation effort a reality.