



LONG-TERM WATER RESOURCE PLANNING



SUSTAINABILITY



WATER MANAGEMENT



NEVADA DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES

Key Findings from the 2021 Water Resource Public Survey

SURVEY PURPOSE & SCOPE

OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS,
NDWR WILL PRODUCE A
CONTEMPORARY, HIGH-LEVEL
PLAN THAT ACCOUNTS FOR
THE MANY CHANGES THAT
HAVE OCCURRED OVER THE
PAST DECADES.

In late 2021, the Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR) conducted a public survey at the onset of the process to update the 1999 State Water Plan. The survey was designed to collect feedback from a diversity of Nevadans regarding their water-related concerns, priorities, and perceptions. The survey responses provide a baseline dataset that will be considered in the planning process.

The 1999 State Water Plan summarized a broad range of water-related data and information, describes policy issues, and provided recommended actions. Over the next few years, NDWR will produce a contemporary, high-level plan that accounts for the many changes that have occurred over the past decades. A better understanding of the public's current views helps provide context for the plan, as the responses illuminate opportunities and challenges that can be addressed in the planning process and the final product.

The survey was distributed publicly via a press release, social media, and email blasts from NDWR and its partners. The questions asked survey respondents to rate their level of concern on a variety of water resource topics, rank the importance of various water planning priorities, and share any visions for water management in the future.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

1,192 participants completed the survey, and responses were received from all Nevada counties. While most of Nevada's population resides in urban and suburban areas, **39%** of respondents indicated they lived in rural or semi-rural places.

Respondents included a diverse representation of concerned citizens, business owners, government employees, elected officials, tribal members, scientists, and agricultural producers.

The greatest number of responses were provided by the oldest and longest-tenured Nevada residents: **42%** of respondents were age **61** or older, and **58%** have lived in Nevada over **20** years.



SURVEY SAYS...

TOP TOPICS OF CONCERN

Based on a list of **22** water planning topics, respondents' level of concern was greatest for the following topics:

- Adequate long-term water resource planning
- Inefficient or wasteful water use
- Future water supplies for them and their community

CHANGING AWARENESS OVER TIME

79% of respondents stated that they pay more attention to water issues now than they did in the past. Among these respondents, drought was the most common reason contributing to their increased awareness.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING PLANNING PRIORITIES TO YOU?

💧 EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
 💧 VERY IMPORTANT
 💧 SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
 💧 NOT IMPORTANT

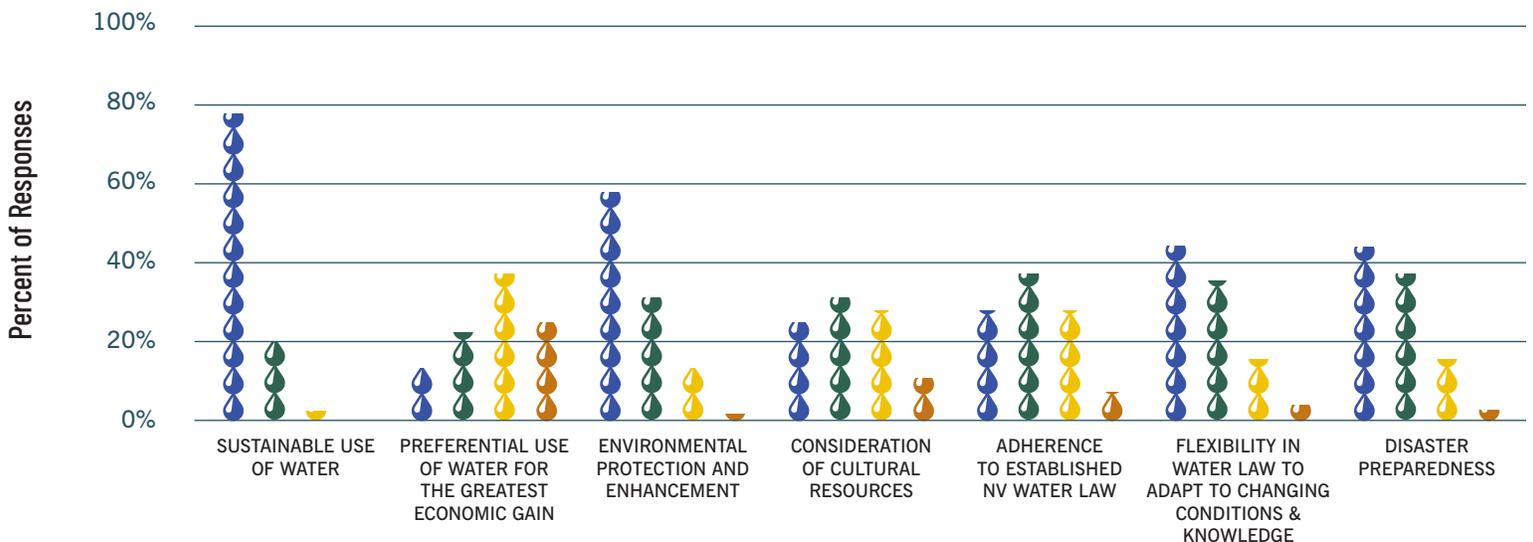


FIGURE 1. Survey respondents ranked the level of importance of seven different water resource management priorities. Sustainable use of water was ranked as an extremely important priority in 77% of responses.

Urban vs. Rural PERSPECTIVES

While responses to some survey topics were similar across the state, the responses to certain topics presented a clear distinction between urban/suburban and rural/semi-rural responses.

Urban and suburban respondents expressed greater concern about:

- Impacts from more extreme weather events
- Long term impacts from changes in climate

URBAN

Rural and semi-rural respondents expressed greater concern about:

- Protecting senior water rights and domestic wells
- Inter-basin transfer of water from rural basins to supply urban areas
- Availability of water for agriculture

RURAL

Open-ended RESPONSES

IF YOU HAD 15 MINUTES WITH THE GOVERNOR, WHAT ARE THE TOP WATER ISSUES YOU WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS?

The word cloud provides a visualization of how frequently respondents listed or discussed various water resource themes. The larger a word or phrase, the more frequently it came up as a topic in the pool of responses. Many of the responses covered multiple themes.



WHAT SHOULD THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF NEVADA'S WATER RESOURCES LOOK LIKE?

Three closely-related topics dominated the responses to this question: water conservation and efficiency; growth and development concerns; and sustainable use of our water resources. Responses clearly expressed a widespread desire for sustainable, conservative, and adaptive management of water resources in the driest state in the nation. There was particular interest in reducing turf coverage, replacing turf with better-adapted plants, restricting water use, and dis-incentivizing water waste.

Many responses emphasized protecting water for environmental purposes or maintaining a balance between environmental and human population needs. Additionally, many comments expressed opposition to the transfer of water from rural basins in Nevada to urbanized ones.

The nature of the responses reflected mixed levels of knowledge and awareness regarding Nevada water resources.

A variety of respondents expressed an interest in or need for additional outreach and education efforts to improve the public's understanding of water resource management. In order to facilitate behavior change, increase public engagement in planning, and improve the public's understanding of the state of water resources in Nevada, the following approaches were repeatedly suggested:

- prioritize outreach efforts,
- increase the availability of digestible information, and
- provide opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

Respondents expressed the importance of basing decisions on science and relying on subject matter experts. Specifically, many respondents acknowledged the need for incorporating the impacts of climate change and the need for better understanding of the hydrology in each of Nevada's 256 administrative groundwater basins.



Take-aways

Overall, the survey shows that respondents are highly concerned about **science-based, long-term water planning** in Nevada. **Rapid development and population growth** have fueled concerns about the availability of water for both human populations and the environment. Accordingly, **sustainable use** of water stands out as a very high priority among survey respondents. The open-ended responses showcased a strong desire for a culture of **water conservation** in Nevada's communities. There is also an appetite for **more data, information, and outreach** from the government and/or water suppliers, as well as opportunities to provide input. The information produced by this survey will be used to help ensure that key topics in the update to the state water plan are addressed and appropriate actions are recommended. The survey responses also provide important direction for future outreach and education efforts.



RISA
Regional Integrated
Sciences and Assessments

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