

*John Sutton is the Water Conservation Manager for El Paso Water Utilities. The department develops and implements programs and activities to meet the goals of El Paso's Public Service Board to achieve and maintain a 20 percent reduction in per capita water use by the year 2000. Projects initiated include the "Water On Request" program in cooperation with the El Paso Restaurant Association and the "Cash for Your Commode" rebate program. John received a B.S. in Horticulture and Landscape Design from Oklahoma State University in 1976. He has worked as a landscape designer for commercial and residential projects for over a decade and has worked with El Paso's Community Action Program and as Public Service Employment Monitor. John is a member of the Water Conservation and Re-Use Committee of the American Water Works Association, Texas Section and is on the Urban Agriculture Subcommittee, Texas A&M Research Center.*



## WHY WATER CONSERVATION? WHY IN EL PASO?

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El Paso is a desert city with a limited supply of readily available water. Groundwater supplies provide 75 percent of our water needs with the remaining 25 percent obtained from surface water via the Rio Grande. Our major groundwater source, the Hueco Bolson, is also shared with Juarez and Chihuahua, Mexico and is predicted to meet our needs only for another 25 to 30 years. Alternate sources of water are estimated to be 4 to 6 times as expensive as present costs.

El Paso's recently completed Water Resource Management Plan looks at anticipated demands and supplies for the next 40 years and identifies water conservation as the priority element for a future water supply, followed by the use of reclaimed water, surface water, and finally groundwater. Water conservation is the least expensive method to deal with a limited supply.

A 40-member citizens advisory board was also named in 1990 to look at all areas of water use and

make recommendations for a comprehensive water conservation program. These recommendations were the basis for the Water Conservation Ordinance that was approved by El Paso City Council in the spring of 1991. This mandatory year-round ordinance restricts certain water-use activities and prohibits water waste. There are guidelines for landscape watering, car washing, leaks, and large water users. Changes in the city's Plumbing Code also require ultra-low-flow plumbing fixtures to be used in all new construction and replacements.

The basis of the Conservation Program is an aggressive educational program on wise water use and the changing of old water-use habits. El Paso Water Utilities' goal is to reduce capita consumption by 20 percent, from 200 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) to 160 gpcd by the year 2000. The program is working, in 1991 our total consumption was the lowest since 1986 with a per capita usage of 173 gpcd. Peak day demands have also been reduced.