

By RICK BRINKMAN  
Special to the Sentinel

Improving the public's understanding of the value of water and promoting wise water use is the mission of the Grand Valley/Lower Gunnison Wise Water Use Council (WWUC). Many of these organizations are also members of DRIP, which brings you these weekly articles in The Daily Sentinel.

The WWUC includes professionals interested in promoting water education, water conservation, and protecting Western Slope water. The organization currently includes the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, domestic water providers, agricultural water providers, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Mesa County Health Department, Tri-County Water in Montrose and the Mesa Soil Conservation District.

The group has identified several opportunities to increase water conservation and water efficiency. One opportunity is through common irrigation standards for subdivisions. These standards, adopted by local governments, would improve the efficiency and reliability of irrigation systems in new developments, thus conserving water for future needs. This would also standardize irrigation systems installed in the urban areas of our community.

Another opportunity is for domestic water providers to offer incentives to their customers via rebates or other compensation for installing low-water use appliances, such as low flow toilets, shower heads, faucet aerators, and water-efficient washers.

Some Front Range water providers have offered these incentives in the past. For example, a homeowner could receive a rebate for purchasing newer, water-efficient appliances such as a clothes washer. Others have offered incentives for removing turf from landscaping or installing low-flow toilets. Rebates are something that the City of Grand Junction, Clifton Water and Ute Water Conservancy District will be discussing as they develop their regional water-conservation plan this year.

The group believes that an educated public will help protect the future quantity and quality of Western Slope water, and that we won't always have the quantity of water available to us that we have now. So, the group will be reaching out to a broader audience to improve and increase public input on water issues. The council may offer a Water 101 course through the Mesa County Water Association, which would cover basic Colorado Water Law. It is also considering a water information center, which could provide materials on upcoming water-policy issues. It's possible that a local Riverwatch monitoring program might even be formed. Visit the DRIP web site at [www.thedripwebsite.com](http://www.thedripwebsite.com) to see what the WWUC decides to offer in your area.

*We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.*