

## New Housing Projects Not Thirsty

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Why should the existing community conserve while City Hall approves more development? It is a question you often hear, and one we welcome the opportunity to address. The building industry has consistently professed that new development projects are not water thirsty. It may surprise you to learn that new construction accounts for less than *½ of one percent* of total water demand every year, and whether new development occurs or not, as population growth continues, water usage will grow unless we implement water conservation across the board.

The building industry also has been pro-active on the conservation front. Beginning nearly two decades ago, we began making water and energy conservation standard in new construction. We have steadily improved on these efforts over the years to the point where a new home uses about 50% less energy than an existing home. Since 1992, new construction has reduced indoor water use by about 9% and in the last thirty years by 34%.

The implication is clear. The largest water and energy savings are to be had from homes built prior to 1980. It is an undisputed fact that the cost benefit ratio of retrofitting these older homes yields impressive results. And that is where our collective focus should be.

### Actively Engaged on Water Policy

Last year the building industry supported code requirements for an additional 20% reduction in indoor water use by 2011. Three years ago, BIA San Diego began its active support and promotion of new drought tolerant landscape standards for the entire state, reducing outdoor water usage by 30 to 50% over current practices. And, our industry has tirelessly supported both energy and water conservation for new construction and we will continue to do so. We all have a responsibility, existing and new users alike, to use water wisely.

Builders and the BIA will also continue to collaborate with government and all various stakeholders on the issue of water availability. When San Diego's drought began bearing down on the region, we engaged in a more comprehensive approach to the region's water needs. We prepared a Water Supply Position document detailing our philosophy on how the region needs to utilize a combination of conservation and supply independence to solve our water crisis. That can be found on the BIA website. [www.biasandiego.org](http://www.biasandiego.org).



In that document, we support more aggressive outdoor water conservation efforts, desalination, water recycling and water reuse, including “indirect potable reuse,” and under the most severe water shortage restrictions, we outlined our position on a voluntary water offset program for new development. This is a thoughtfully constructed document that was well-received by the regulating community.

### **Working Together for Future Generations**

We must all work together and trust one other to do right by everyone, and not just for those who are here but also will be coming here. If we don’t, we are not going to find the right fix to what is a most serious problem we all face together. Without enough water availability, our entire economy, which already is hard hit, cannot survive and it cannot rebound.

### **Study Confirms Industry Stance**

New homes built to today’s standards use far less water than homes built 20 years ago and will use even less water when the California Green Building Standards Code comes into effect in 2011, according to a California Homebuilding Foundation study.

*Water Use in the California Residential Home* was prepared by Stockton-based ConSol, a nationally recognized consultant on energy solutions for production single-family and multifamily builders since 1981. The study examined historical standards on water flow for shower heads, toilets, faucets and clothes washers, as well as water used for landscaping, and compared them to standards used today and those that will come into effect in 2011.

The study found that homes built in 2009 reduced indoor water use by 20 percent, saving more than 15,000 gallons of water per year when compared to homes built in 1990, and that new homes built to the 2011 standards will further reduce indoor water use by 21 percent, saving more than 12,000 gallons per year.

The study also found that landscaping accounts for 57 percent of total household water use, and that the California Department of Water Resources’ Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance will help save an additional 26,000 gallons of water per year.

[Read the complete study](#)

