

Net Blue: Supporting Water-Neutral Community Growth

Net Blue is a collaborative initiative of the Alliance for Water Efficiency, the Environmental Law Institute, and River Network to support sustainable community growth.

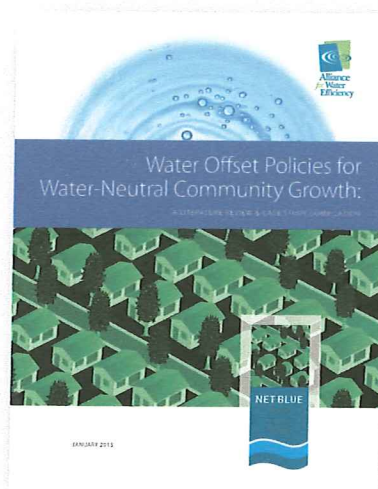


As population growth and availability challenges place increasing pressure on water supplies, growing communities and industrial centers must approach land use and development with new thinking in order to support economic growth. A new perspective on land use is also vital to addressing sustainability in the context of accelerating urbanization. Many metropolitan areas in the United States are growing at extraordinary rates, and much of this growth is concentrated in arid areas where water supplies are already strained. As modern cities seek to absorb thousands and even millions more residents in the coming years, they will need to reevaluate traditional approaches to urban planning and pursue innovative building approaches that consider and address multiple challenges – from carbon emissions to storm water runoff.

Net Blue seeks to create a new paradigm for land use planning and development that prioritizes sustainable growth and protects vital resources through water-neutral growth programs. **Net Blue** promotes the concept of a community permitting new land development and growth by requiring a “neutral” impact of that development on the total water use in the community. The most common scenario where this has been applied entails issuing building permits for development that requires offset of the new water use through water efficiency retrofits of other facilities to achieve a water-neutral impact. This has been successful in helping several communities expand in water scarce areas, but is not a widely implemented practice. An examination of where such policies have been put in place has been published by the Net Blue team and can be downloaded at:

<http://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/net-blue.aspx>

Building on the results of the published report, the project team is now developing a model ordinance that communities can tailor to create a water demand offset approach to meet their needs. The team will work with seven partner communities in different regions throughout North America to develop the ordinance components and to ensure it is adaptable in political climates, legal frameworks, and environmental challenges. (The seven partner communities are Acton, MA; San Francisco, CA; Albuquerque, NM; Austin, TX; Cobb County, GA; Madison, WI; and Bozeman, MT. Additional interested communities will be solicited.)



For more information on the project or to participate please contact Mary Ann Dickinson of the Alliance for Water Efficiency at maryann@a4we.org.