

**2001-02 SONOMA COUNTY  
BUSINESS WATER USAGE SURVEY**



Winter 2001

Prepared by  
The Business Environmental Alliance

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*The BEA is a project developed by the Economic Development Board  
EDB Staff: Erin Williams, Joseph Sherman*

## **Business Environmental Alliance: Business Water Usage Survey**

### **Introduction:**

The availability of water has long been an important issue in Sonoma County, often inspiring passionate debate amongst county residents and officials. Accordingly, the Business Environmental Alliance is constantly seeking input from local businesses regarding how water supply and transmission issues are affecting them, and what these businesses believe needs to be done to solve both potential and existing problems.

The Business Environmental Alliance's Business Water Usage Survey was conducted in October and November of 2001 to make the following determinations: how water supply and transmission issues are affecting the "bottom line" for Sonoma County businesses and organizations, how they view these issues, how they are responding to it, and how they feel local governments or other organizations can assist them in this process.

Many of these water issues go unnoticed in times of adequate water supply. However, it is difficult to predict when a drought may occur. Such an event may tax area water supplies to or beyond their capacity. Thus, it is important that businesses and organizations address these issues before they become vitally necessary. Additional benefits to this prudent self-evaluation process can include reduced water and sanitation bills.

This Business Water Usage Survey was conducted among a representative cross-section of 110 water users in Sonoma County, California. It was sent to organizations believed to be major consumers of water. Identification of this survey's recipients was based upon factors such as sector and size. A total of twenty-three respondents returned completed surveys, for a response rate of approximately 21%.

## **Overview and Action Opportunities:**

Analysis of survey data for this document revealed a number of key themes:

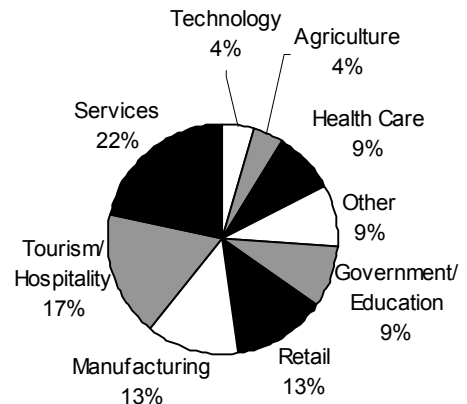
- More than 80% of survey respondents consider water availability to be among their highest priority business considerations.
- More than 80% of respondents consider the price of water to be a significant priority amongst business considerations. More than one third of these businesses consider it among their highest priorities.
- Approximately three-quarters of respondents would be willing to make changes in water usage if significant reductions in cost could result.
- Water supply and transmission are important issues that can, and will, affect business expansion and relocation decisions.
- Approximately three-quarters of respondents have implemented voluntary water-conserving measures, and over half have surveyed their facilities in order to consider improving the efficiency of water-using equipment.

Water issues can play a significant role in the decision processes of Sonoma County businesses and organizations. Indeed, water continues to be an important concern, and businesses are regularly taking water supply and transmission issues into consideration. In an effort to ensure that respondents' voices are heard by those in positions to potentially provide assistance, this information will be passed on to the following:

- **Sonoma County Board of Supervisors**
- **Sonoma County Water Agency**
- **City of Santa Rosa**
- **City of Petaluma**
- **City of Sonoma**
- **City of Cotati**
- **City of Rohnert Park**
- **Valley of the Moon Water District**
- **Forestville Water District**
- **Sonoma County Business Resource Conservation Focus Group**

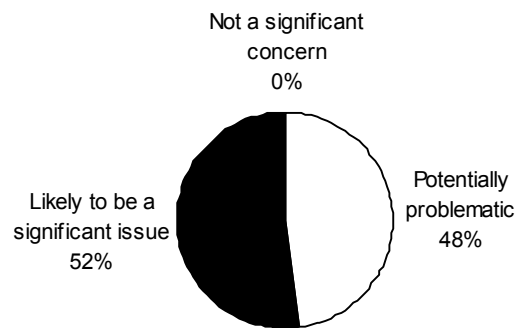
## Classification of Businesses

Most of the respondents completing this survey identified themselves as Services, Tourism or Hospitality, Manufacturing, or Retail.



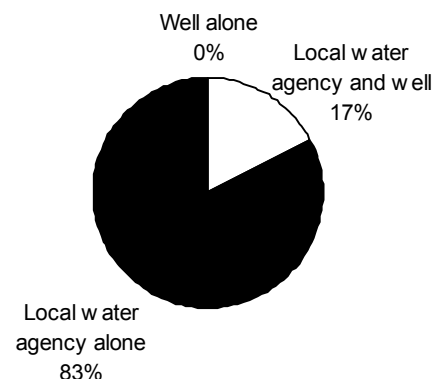
## 1. What is your perception of the future of the water supply in Sonoma County?

All respondents felt that the water supply in Sonoma County could be a significant concern in the future, with responses split approximately in half between “potentially problematic” and “likely to be a significant issue.”



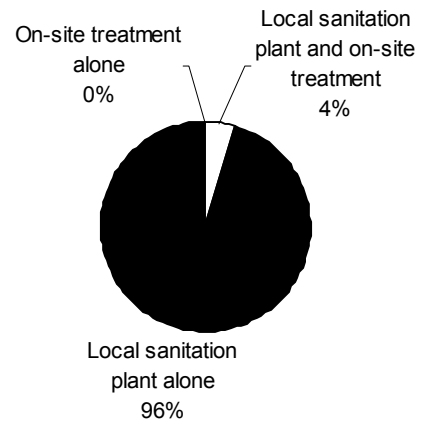
## 2. From what source(s) does your organization currently obtain water?

All respondents obtain water from their local water agency. An additional 17% of responding businesses also obtain water from wells.



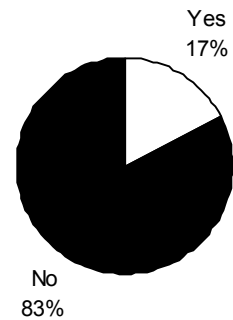
### 3. Where is your organization's wastewater treated?

All respondents reported sending wastewater out to their local sanitation plant. Additionally, 4% of respondents reported performing some on-site treatment.



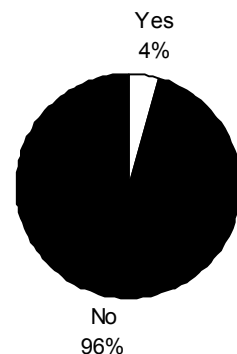
### 4. Does your organization have any back-up water supplies?

83% of responding businesses reported no backup water supplies.



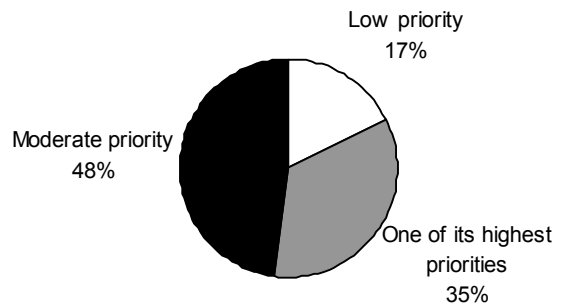
### 5. Does your organization have any plans to add back-up water supplies?

Only 4% of respondents reported any imminent plans to add back-up water supplies.



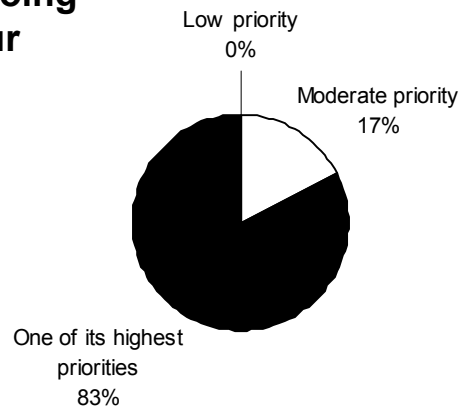
**6. Compared to other costs of doing business, how high of a priority does your organization consider the cost of water to be?**

Nearly half of responding businesses reported that they consider the cost of water to be a moderate priority, while more than one third considered the cost of water to be one of their highest priorities.



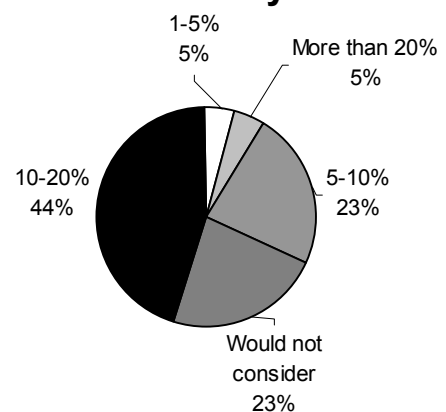
**7. Compared to other considerations of doing business, how high of a priority does your organization consider the *availability* of water to be?**

Every responding business listed the availability of water as a moderate to high priority, with 83% of respondents citing water availability as one of their highest priorities.



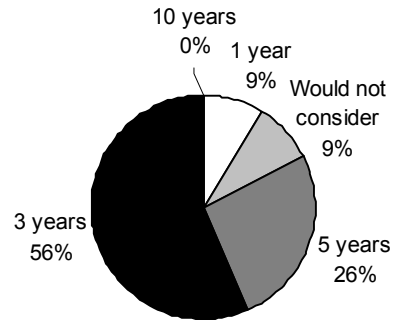
**8. At what percent reduction in overall water costs would you consider changing your processes?**

The majority of businesses would consider changing their processes for a 10-20% reduction in water costs. 23% of respondents would consider a change for 5-10% savings, while another 23% would not consider changing at any price.



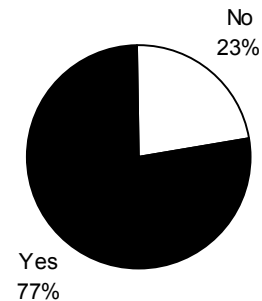
**9. At what payback period would you consider making a significant capital outlay to change your processes to save water and reduce wastewater?**

More than half of responding businesses felt that 3 years was an ideal payback time on any capital outlays aimed toward improving water-efficiency. Additionally, more than one quarter of respondents would be willing to wait out a payback period as long as 5 years.



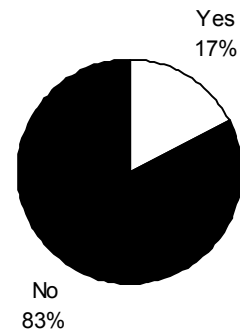
**10. Has your organization implemented any voluntary water conserving measures?**

More than three quarters of responding businesses have implemented voluntary water conserving measures.



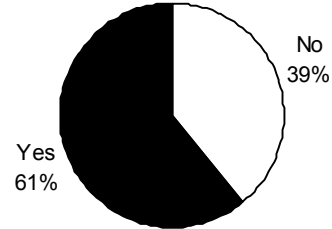
**11. Is your organization recycling any water?**

17% of respondents indicated that they are currently recycling water in their businesses.



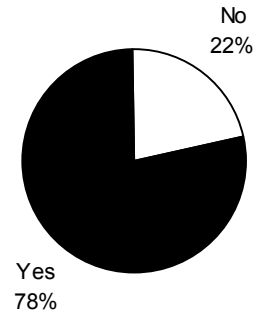
**12. Has your organization surveyed its facilities and considered its options for improving the efficiency of water-using equipment?**

61% of responding businesses have surveyed their facilities and considered options for improving the efficiency of water-using equipment.



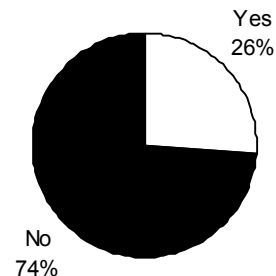
**13. Would a free water-usage assessment by a qualified independent contractor assist your organization in implementing water-efficient practices?**

78% of respondents felt that their business could benefit from a free water-usage assessment by a qualified independent contractor.



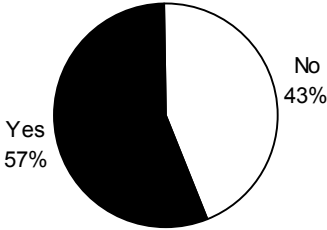
**14. Are you hesitant for any reason to take measures to improve your business's water efficiency?**

26% of responding businesses indicated that they are somewhat hesitant to take measures to improve water efficiency. The most common reasons for this hesitation among respondents were monetary expense and amount of time required for evaluation.



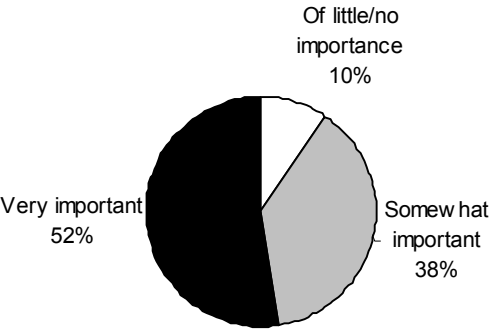
**15. Does your organization communicate concern over water usage issues to its employees?**

More than one half of respondents indicated that they make a point of communicating concern over water usage issues to their employees.



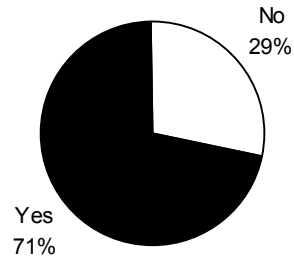
**16. If your organization were to consider expanding in Sonoma County or relocating elsewhere, how important a factor would water supply and transmission issues be in that decision?**

90% of responding businesses indicated that water supply and transmission issues would be at least moderately important to them were they to consider relocation or expansion. More than half of all respondents felt this would be a very important factor.



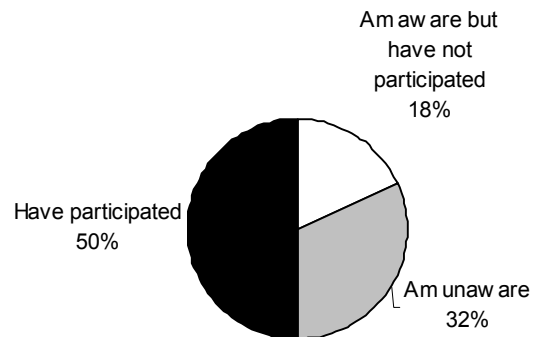
**17. Would you be interested in meeting with other organizations to share or learn ways of making your business more water efficient?**

Nearly three quarters of businesses felt they could be helped by meeting with other organizations to share ideas for water efficiency.



**18. Are you aware of, and has your business participated in, any programs that currently exist to increase water efficiency? (e.g. equipment replacement programs)**

Half of responding businesses indicated they had participated in water efficiency programs. However, nearly one third of respondents were not aware that such programs exist.



## **Acknowledgements**

Many people contributed their valuable time and ideas to this project. Without the help of these individuals, we would have been unable to conduct this study.

Thanks are due to the organizations that took the time to complete this survey; without their cooperation this project would not have been possible.

The Sonoma County Water Agency and City of Santa Rosa were extremely helpful to us, providing background and ideas for this report.

Special thanks also to Erin Fredrick, Joseph Sherman, Arianne Sperry, and Erin Williams, past and present staff members of the Business Environmental Alliance and Sonoma County Economic Development Board, for conducting the survey and preparing the bulk of the document.



**2001-02 Sonoma County  
Business Water Usage Survey**

**Water availability is an increasingly important issue in Sonoma County. As such, the Business Environmental Alliance is seeking to gauge the interest of businesses in participating in programs that could help to lessen the potential negative impact that could result from a water shortage. Your assistance in our evaluation process is greatly appreciated.**

***Notice of Confidentiality:***

*We respect your right to confidentiality, therefore, your company name and survey responses will not be released without consent.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Business (please check all that apply):

Hi-tech/Info-tech \_\_\_\_\_ Agriculture \_\_\_\_\_ Retail \_\_\_\_\_  
Services \_\_\_\_\_ Manufacturing \_\_\_\_\_ Tourism/Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_  
Health Care \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your perception of the future of the water supply in Sonoma County?

- Not a significant concern  
 Potentially problematic  
 Likely to be a significant issue

2. From what source(s) does your organization currently obtain water? (check all that apply)

- Local water agency  
 Well  
 Other Type: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where does your organization's wastewater go?

- Local sanitation plant  
 Treated on-site  
 Other Type: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Does your organization have back-up water supplies?

- Yes Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

5. Does your organization have any plans to add back-up water supplies?

- Yes Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

6. Compared to other costs of doing business, how high of a priority does your organization consider the *cost* of water to be?

- One of its highest priorities
- Moderate priority
- Low priority

7. Compared to other considerations of doing business, how high of a priority does your organization consider the *availability* of water to be?

- One of its highest priorities
- Moderate priority
- Low priority

8. At what percent reduction in overall water costs would you consider changing your processes?

- 1-5%
- 5-10%
- 10%-20%
- Would not consider at any price
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. At what payback period would you consider making a significant capital outlay to change your processes to save water and reduce wastewater?

- 10 Years
- 5 Years
- 3 Years
- 1 Years
- Would not consider at any pay-back period.
- Other

10. Has your organization implemented any voluntary water conserving measures?

- Yes
- No

If YES, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Is your organization recycling any water?

- Yes
- No

If YES, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Has your organization surveyed its facilities and considered its options for improving the efficiency of water-using equipment?

- Yes
- No

13. Would a free water usage assessment by a qualified independent contractor assist your organization in implementing water-efficient practices?

- Yes
- No

14. Are you hesitant for any reason to take measures to improve your business's water efficiency?

- Yes
- No

If YES, for what reasons? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Does your organization communicate concern over water usage issues to its employees?

- Yes
- No

If YES, how? \_\_\_\_\_

16. If your organization were to consider expanding in Sonoma County or relocating elsewhere, how important a factor would water supply and transmission issues be in that decision?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Of little/no importance

17. Would your organization be interested in meeting with other organizations to share or learn ways of making your organization more water-efficient?

- Yes
- No

18. Are you aware of, and has your business participated in, any programs that currently exist to increase water efficiency? (e.g. equipment replacement programs)

- Have participated
- Am aware but have not participated
- Am unaware

If your business has participated in any program(s), please elaborate:

\_\_\_\_\_

19. Have you visited the BEA website?  
(<http://www.sonoma-county.org/bea>)

- Yes
- No

20. We would love to hear any other comments that you may have regarding water usage issues. Please contact us at:  
**bea@sonoma-county.org**

Or simply write them here:

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in the 2001-'02 Sonoma County Business Water Usage Survey. Please return this survey by **Friday, November 30, 2001** to:

Business Environmental Alliance  
401 College Avenue, Suite D  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401-5148