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# Area water authority urges meter change

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With a water meter in every Reno and Sparks house, Truckee Meadows Water Authority officials want the same by early next year for 11,054 county households now paying a flat monthly rate.

On Wednesday, several board members said that would be fair to the 77,292 customers who volunteered to switch meters or who bought homes or businesses required to have meters.

The average metered customer uses 150,000 gallons a year versus 250,000 gallons a year for flat-rate customers, officials said.

"Let's just flip the switch," said Reno Councilman Dave Aiuzzi, a board member of the not-for-profit government water purveyor, adding that he's tired of people not paying for what they use.

For existing homes in the Truckee Meadows, the housing industry has paid to retrofit them with meters.

Four years ago, the TMWA

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'Let's just flip the switch.'

DAVE AIUZZI ■ Board member of Truckee Meadows Water Authority  
about switching more county homes to water meters

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board agreed it wouldn't force people to be billed for metered usage until every single-family home had a meter. That was achieved more than a year ago.

With a year's worth of records, the board was told the switch can be made without enough revenue loss to prompt a rate increase.

The board wants a plan to approve in January.

"That's a good time," said Sparks Councilman Mike Carrigan, TMWA board chairman. "Out of the winter season and start into the spring."

Reno Mayor Bob Cashell said he's tired of seeing water running down the gutter from homes. People on flat rates can use all the water they want for \$74.90 a month.

Lori Williams, TMWA general manager, said that homeowners should be given fair warning so

they can xeriscape or do other work to reduce water usage.

The board agreed not to conduct public hearings. Sparks Mayor Geno Martini, another board member, said customers should be notified of the change by letter.

Officials told the board the unmetered customers would provide \$800,000 a year in new revenue if they don't change their habits. But if those customers cut their water use by 15 percent, TMWA would lose \$500,000 a year. If by half, the loss would be \$3.5 million a year.

About 5,000 of the 11,054 households would save money in the conversion, said Kim Mazeris, TMWA customer services director.

Less consumption means more water for drought years and lessens the need to expand water treatment facilities. The average

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## TOP 3 WATER WASTERS IN 2005\*

1. A residential customer paid \$899 in 2005 (\$74.90 a month) for 4,434,000 gallons of water. If metered, that customer would have paid \$12,887.

2. A customer consumed 1,782,000 gallons that would have cost \$5,190 at a metered rate.

3. A customer used 1,593,000 gallons that would have cost \$4,643 at a metered rate.

\*Among customers using a three-quarter-inch line, the most common.

SOURCE: Truckee Meadows Water Authority

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TMWA metered customer uses 150,000 gallons a year versus 250,000 gallons a year for flat-rate customers, Mazeris said.

About 4,104 housing units still do not have meters in the Truckee Meadows because of extra work required such as splitting shared water lines at duplexes or apartment buildings.

But of these, Mazeris said 2,000 will have meters by next July.