

# Issue Brief

RHODE ISLAND  
DIVISION OF  
PLANNING

## RHODE ISLAND WATER 2030

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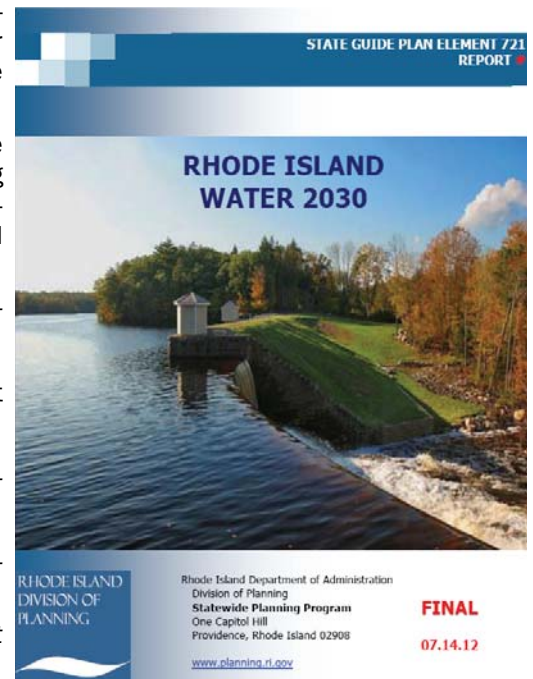
### New State Guide Plan Element Adopted

The Rhode Island Division of Planning is pleased to announce the adoption of the latest update to the State Guide Plan, **Rhode Island Water 2030**, State Guide Plan Element 721. This Plan was developed by the Land Use staff of the Statewide Planning Program, in cooperation with an advisory committee of stakeholders. It was adopted by the State Planning Council on June 14, 2012.

It addresses planning for all drinking water used in the State of Rhode Island, including private wells. The document stresses the need to plan for and manage the availability of water, to reduce the overall demand for drinking water, and to increase protection of all drinking water sources (public or private). It also addresses necessary ongoing operation and maintenance of water systems to meet public health standards, to sustain economic development, and to protect the overall quality of life in Rhode Island. The Plan contains new goals (7 total), policies, and strategies for maintaining existing water systems and protecting future water supplies which replace all previous water supply goals, policies and strategies of the State Guide Plan. Consideration is given to ground and surface water resources as components of the overall water supply system for the State. The need for careful consideration of water supply capacities and delivery systems in community and water supply plans is stressed, with allocations for land use and development based upon these capacities.

**Rhode Island Water 2030** consolidates five prior State Guide Plan Elements regarding drinking water in Rhode Island into a single element. The following Elements (along with their goals, policies, and strategies) have been rescinded in their entirety:

- ◆ 1990 Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan (Element 125)
- ◆ 1991 Water Supply Plan for RI (Element 721)
- ◆ 1993 Rhode Island Emergency Water Supply Management Plan (Element 723)
- ◆ 1997 Water Supply Policies for Rhode Island (Element 722)
- ◆ 2002 Rhode Island Drought Management Plan (Element 724)



State Guide Plan Element 721



## Addressing RI Water 2030 in Community Comprehensive Plans

As an Element of the State Guide Plan, *RI Water 2030* sets forth seven new goals for all drinking water supplies (including private wells) that must, under State Law, be reflected in community comprehensive plans by June 14, 2013. Further, as Element 721 of the State Guide Plan, it requires state agencies, municipalities and all public and private entities using state or federal funding to carry out drinking water supply planning, management, and projects in ways that are consistent with the Plan. It is intended that this Element provides the prevailing goals and polices for drinking water supply planning in the State.

In Rhode Island, all cities and towns plan for and regulate land use through a community comprehensive plan (CCP). It is the CCP that serves as the basis for all municipal land use regulations. An important new law, the Water Use and Efficiency Act, passed in 2009, requires more coordination of water supply information with land use planning. Water supply related information; including goals, policies and strategies, resource inventories, and supplies are generally located within two parts of a CCP: the natural resources and the services and facilities discussions. The plan calls for communities to create a single water supply section within the CCP for clarity.

A water supply section of a CCP will not be a one-size-fits-all item to which an exhaustive checklist can or will apply but it should coordinate all of the entities involved in drinking water resource management for a community. The data to be included will vary by municipality depending upon its drinking water sources and other factors, such as but not limited to, the presence of water districts in the community. By having all water supply related policies and actions in one place, the complex issues surrounding water supply become more accessible and understandable to the general public. Few people interact with water districts or the plans and documents they produce, but many people interact with a CCP. Finally, a single water supply section will stress the significance of drinking water and highlight its importance in the future of the community. Identifying water supply limitations (or opportunities) in the CCP will ensure that comprehensive plans are realistic and environmentally sustainable. A water resources subsection is key to providing a sound foundation to implement the smart growth called for in another State Guide Plan, *Land Use 2025*, throughout the state.



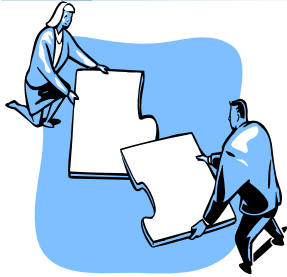
Everyone needs drinking water. A safe and adequate drinking water supply is critical to the sustainability of existing communities and to future growth. The Plan calls for integrated planning where municipal officials, state officials and water suppliers coordinate water supply information together in order to better balance future water demands against water availability.

An Executive Summary of the Plan will be available shortly. If you have any questions regarding the new plan or the incorporation of the content into a CCP, please contact:



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The full Plan is available on the Division of Planning's Statewide Planning Program website.  
[http://www.planning.ri.gov/landuse/RI%20Water%202030\\_06.14.12\\_Final.pdf](http://www.planning.ri.gov/landuse/RI%20Water%202030_06.14.12_Final.pdf)



## Putting the Pieces Together

Data for a water supply section may be difficult to collect and analyze. Planners will face challenges in preparing a water supply section. Water districts often serve multiple communities and have other planning and reporting requirements. Some towns may have multiple water suppliers; some may share suppliers with other communities; some have a mixture of public suppliers and areas where there are no public supplies, and some have no suppliers at all. The plans, time horizons, and projections made by various suppliers may not follow municipal time frames or even boundaries. A CCP water supply section should have three parts;

1. a mapped inventory with accompanying information
2. an analysis and
3. goals, policies, and strategies.

The content should be at a general level that is appropriate for that community and be consistent with the rest of the CCP. The section should summarize or reference but not repeat technical studies related to water supply. It should interpret those studies into goals policies, and strategies that should relate to land use and other infrastructure policies and strategies while also remaining consistent with the other topics of the CCP. Consultation with any agency operating the water systems and or state agencies may also be helpful in the development of needs associated with the water systems.

The section should explain how available drinking water will support planned growth based on estimated future drinking water resources. Emphasis should be placed on goals, policies, and strategies for managing water demands, assuring that the desired future land use matches the available water supply, encouraging the efficient use of water, encouraging opportunities for water recycling, drought mitigation, and emergency response management.



## Suggested Water Supply Content

### Inventory

- ◆ map of water-related features related to drinking water supply, such as but not limited to: water bodies, aquifers, and surface water reservoirs and boundaries of watersheds
- ◆ general descriptive parameters about groundwater or surface source waters used for drinking water
- ◆ areas of public water service shown on district boundaries/ and limits of service

### Analysis

- ◆ Compare the capacity of water infrastructure to accommodate existing and future land uses in order to identify the drinking water resources that will be adequate for the needs of the existing and future development proposed in the land use element of the CCP
- ◆ Evaluate existing or potential water quality problems that may impact water supplies

**Goals, polices and strategies** (including the responsibility for and the timing of proposed strategies

- ◆ for the protection of source water bodies, aquifers, groundwater basins, rivers, and streams used as drinking water.
- ◆ for the review and siting of major land uses and new major water users in relation to water availability and water system capacities
- ◆ for improving water use efficiency
- ◆ For reuse of water
- ◆ for drought mitigation and coordination responsibilities
- ◆ for emergency response and coordination responsibilities

### Other Plans to be Cross Referenced

- ◆ Executive Summaries of Water Supply Systems Management Plans (WSSMP).
- ◆ Source Water Protection Plans (SWAP) of the Department of Health

### Information Sources

- ◆ RI Geographic Information System (RIGIS)
- ◆ State agencies, including:
  - ◆ Division of Planning – Water Resources Board
  - ◆ Coastal Resources Management Council
  - ◆ DEM – Water Resources Office
  - ◆ Department of Health
- ◆ U.S. Geological Survey
- ◆ State, regional and municipal water supply agencies that operate the facilities. This will include but not be limited to:
  - ◆ Public works or water superintendent
  - ◆ Fire chiefs
  - ◆ Municipal or regional water company or authority

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The Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, Division of Planning, Department of Administration is established by § 42-11-10 of the Rhode Island General Laws as the central planning agency for Rhode Island. The State Planning Council, comprised of federal, state, local, public representatives, and other advisors, guides the work of the Program. The objectives of the Program are to:

- ◆ To prepare State Guide Plan Elements.
- ◆ To coordinate activities of the public and private sectors within the framework the State Guide Plan.
- ◆ To assist municipal governments with planning.
- ◆ To advise the Governor and others on physical, social, and economic planning related topics.
- ◆ To provide for cooperative development, conservation, and use of drinking water resources by the State, municipal agencies, public water systems, special water districts and privately owned public water systems.
- ◆ To review all plans and proposals for construction or installation of facilities for water supply for conformance with the State Guide Plan.

**RHODE ISLAND  
WATER 2030**

**State Guide Plan Element 721**

**Vision Statement**

*To ensure safe, reliable, ample water supplies to meet the State's short and long range needs while preserving the physical, biological,, and chemical integrity of the water resources of the State.*