



City of Santa Fe Water

December 31, 2020

City of Santa Fe Water Survey: Summary Results

As part of the first year of a five-year planning process, City of Santa Fe Water and Santa Fe County Utilities conducted surveys to identify the priorities and interest of Utility customers and water users in the greater Santa Fe area. In the fall of 2020 two surveys were conducted simultaneously to assess the priorities of water users in the Santa Fe area. 678 people responded to a detailed, online survey. 1931 people responded to a briefer postcard survey included in the City of Santa Fe September utility bill. While the sample is not representative, it does give clear indications of water related preferences and concerns of local residents. The responses to these surveys have been tabulated and the findings are summarized below.

1. Relative Importance of Different Water Issues

When asked to rank six different water related issues, online survey respondents who responded with unique rankings (318) picked long term water supply resiliency and groundwater levels in the greater Santa Fe area as their top concerns. Postcard survey respondents also chose water supply resiliency as most important, but cost of the water bill was the second most important issue for the postcard sample. Groundwater levels were ranked as a more important issue by those on wells as compared to other sources of water. When only City water customers are considered and online (191) and postcard survey responses (1320) with unique rankings were combined, water resiliency, water bill, and groundwater levels were the most important issues in that order as seen in Figure 1.

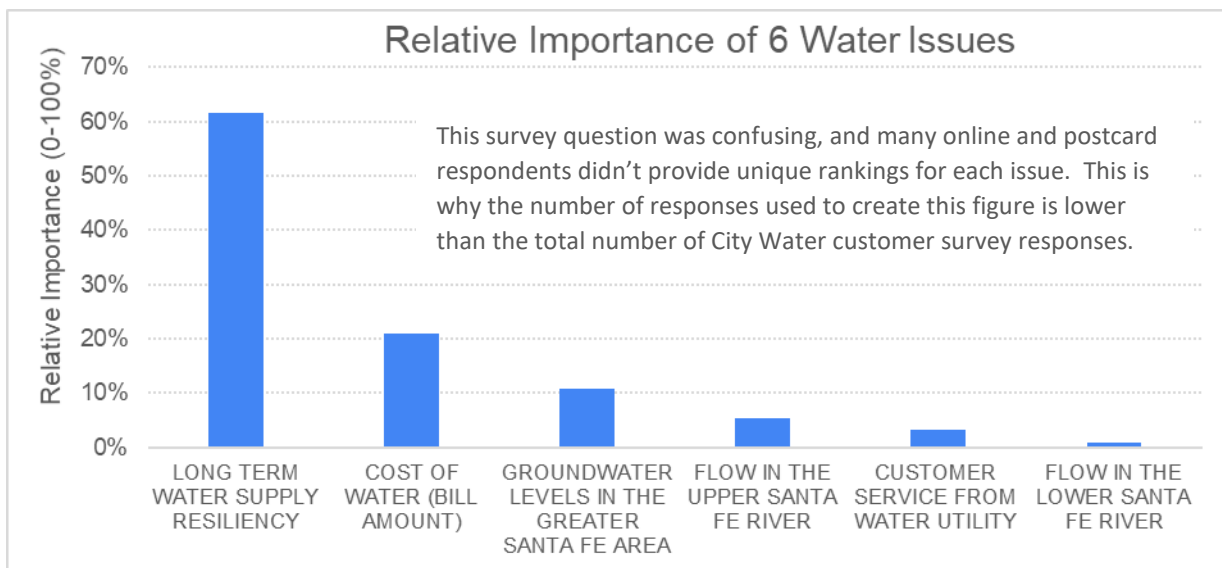


Figure 1: Relative importance of different water related issues to City of Santa Fe Water customers (191 online, 1320 postcards)

2. Willingness to Pay

When the online survey participants were asked if they would be willing to pay more for water for any of several reasons, more renewable energy use for treating and distributing water was the top choice. Less use of groundwater in either the greater City area or the Buckman Wellfield was a close second. Insofar as renewable energy may be equated with resiliency, this result is consistent with resiliency and groundwater levels as the top ranked concerns for online survey respondents. 46% of City Water customers expressed willingness to pay more for additional flow in the upper Santa Fe River. 29% of survey respondents not connected to the City or County Utilities would be willing to pay more for to be able to connect. These results are shown in Figure 2.

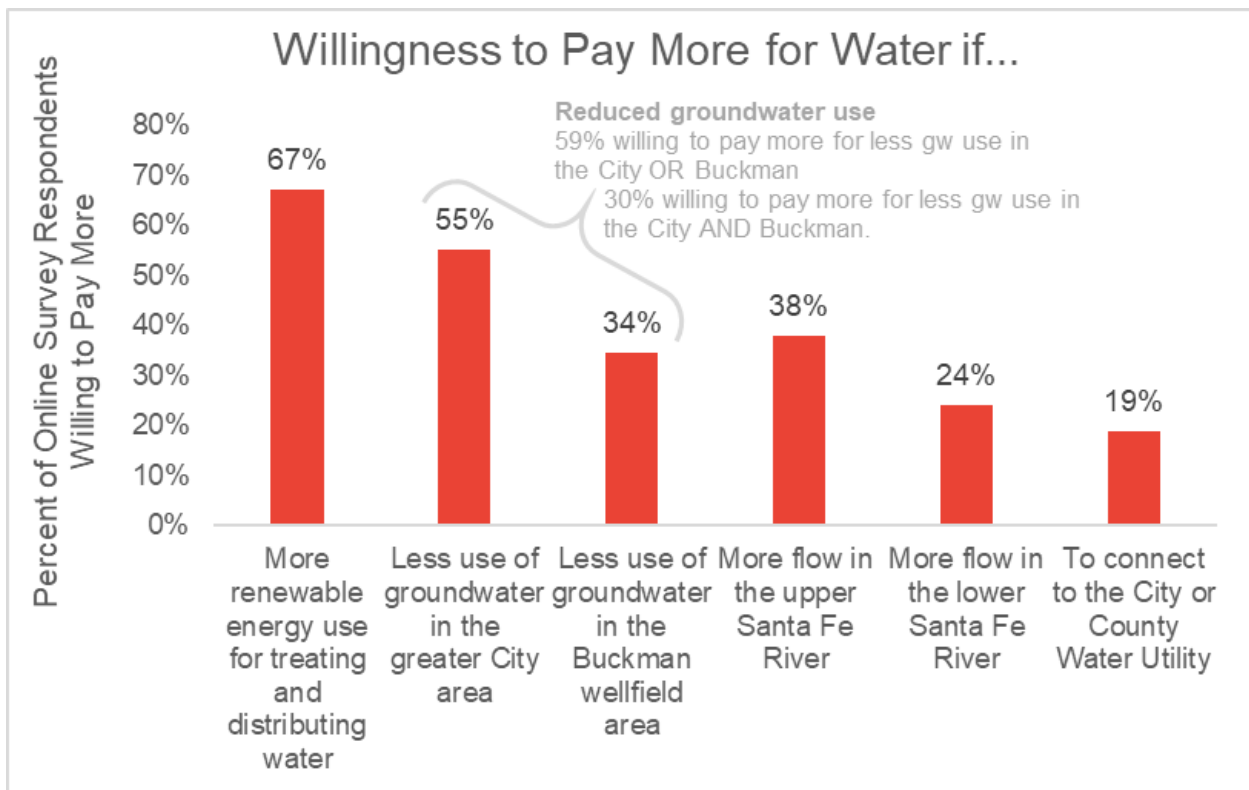


Figure 2: Percent of survey respondents willing to pay more for water if that payment supported alternate water operations

3. Aspects of Water Planning of Interest

Online and postcard survey participants were asked what aspects of water planning were of interest to them, from a list that included:

- Climate change impacts to water supply
- Natural variability of water supply
- Projected growth in the greater Santa Fe area
- Strategies for adaptation to decreased water supply &/or increased water demand
- Sustainability programs and initiatives
- Environmental/ecosystem implications of water planning

Interest in all aspects of water planning was high, with all aspects chosen as of interest by over 50% of online and postcard respondents. The top two choices of the online respondents were: 1. strategies for adaptation to decreased water supply &/or increased water demand; and 2. climate change impacts to water supply. Postcard respondents selected climate change impacts as the top interest as did those getting their water supply from outside of the City or County Utility. Selected interests of online, online City Utility only, and postcard (City Utility only) responses is shown in Figure 3.

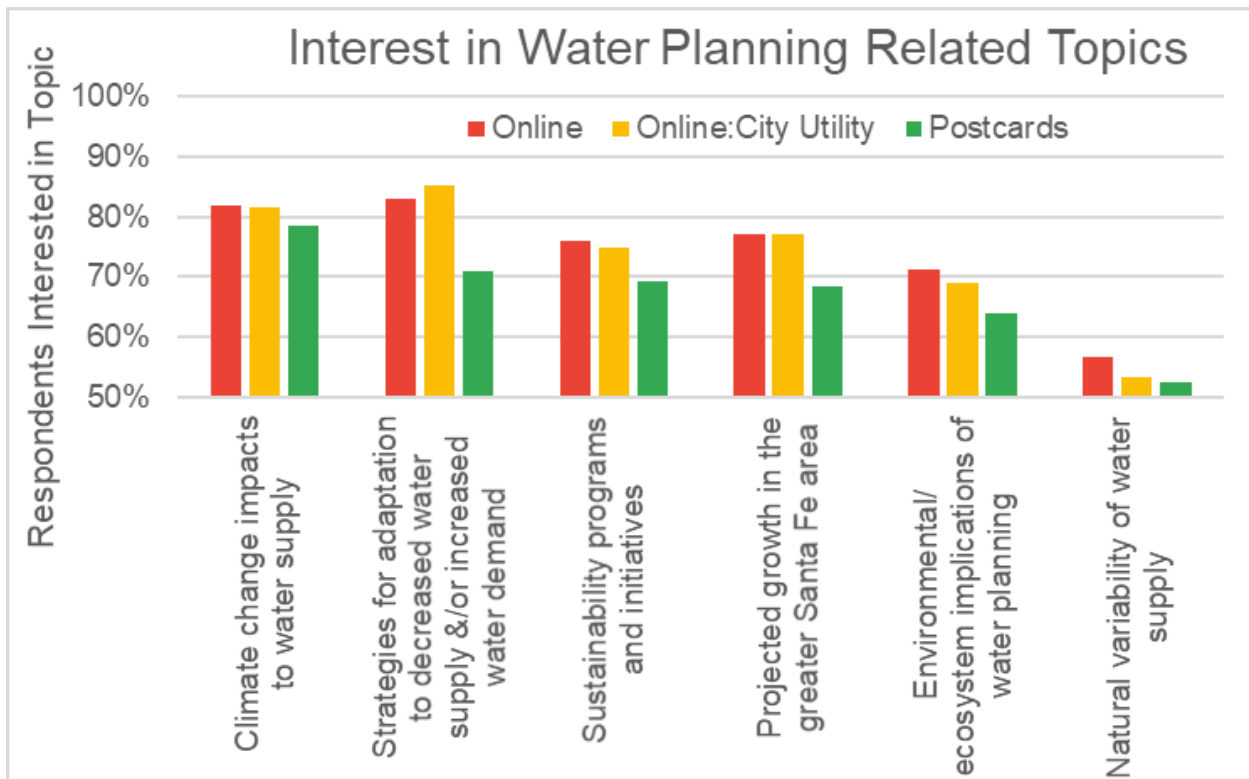


Figure 3: Aspects of water planning of interest to online and postcard survey respondents. Note that the Y axis starts at 50%.

4. Economic, Social, and Environmental Services of River and Watershed

Online survey participants were asked to rate the relative importance of economic, social and environmental benefits associated with the Santa Fe River and Watershed. On average, respondents weighted environmental benefits as the most important, followed by economic benefits, with social benefits weighted the lowest. These results are shown in Figure 4.

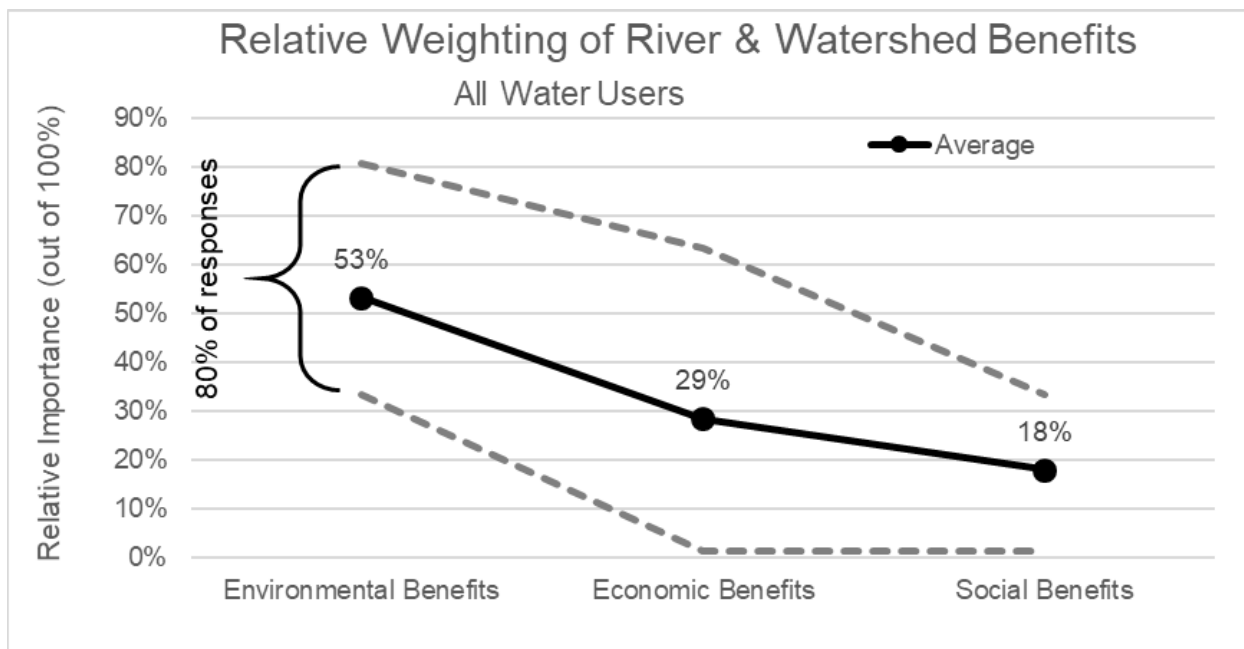


Figure 4: Average relative weighting of environmental, economic, and social benefits of the Santa Fe River and Watershed. The area between the dashed lines captures the middle 80% of the responses.

5. Population in the Greater Santa Fe Area

When asked to provide an opinion on population levels in Santa Fe, opinions differed widely. In total, 38% of online survey respondents believed that the current population in the greater Santa Fe Area is too large, 47% believed that the current population in the greater Santa Fe Area is about right, and 15% believed that the greater Santa Fe Area should continue to grow.

6. Outdoor Water Use Preferences

Online survey respondents were asked to rank outdoor uses of water if there were limited potable water. The top scoring item was irrigation of community fruit/vegetable gardens followed by private fruit/vegetable gardens. Irrigation of golf courses ranked last, though the relative importance of golf course irrigation tended to increase with the age of the respondent.

7. Perception of Risk of Water Resource Supply Disruption

Online survey participants were asked to estimate the probability of ten specific events that would seriously affect water availability in Santa Fe in the near term (10 years) and longer term (50 years) as Certain, Extremely Likely, Likely, Unlikely, and Extremely Unlikely. Assigning a probability of 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, and 0% to these options allows analysis of a weighted average perceived probability of each event. Interestingly, in aggregate, all of these potential supply disruptions are perceived as more likely to occur than not to occur (>50% weighted probability) in the next 50 years. During evaluation of supply scenarios to be considered in the current long range water resources planning effort, these perceived risks may be weighed against expert opinion and science based estimates of the probabilities of occurrence for these events. The perceived probabilities are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Perceived likelihood of water supply disruption

Threat	10 Years	50 Years
Rio Grande flow will drop below 200 cubic feet per second for 5 days?	57%	72%
Upper Santa Fe River Watershed will burn in the next 50 years?	51%	68%
A water supplier with at least 100 customers unable to provide water?	47%	62%
A contaminant of human origin will be detected in a City well?	44%	58%
A contaminant of human origin will be detected in a Buckman well?	46%	57%

8. Short Answer Responses

Questions 13, 14, 24 and the postcards asked for comments from the respondents. Over 750 comments were received. No summarization can do justice to every specific suggestion, but the responses have been organized and saved for planning purposes.

Question 13 asked, “Is there another supply or general system disruption that you think should be considered in the water planning process?”. Most responses grouped around: maintenance failures, consequences of climate change, reduced supply from various causes, regulation, and cost.

Question 14 asked, “Are there any specific actions you think the City/County should consider?”. Most responses grouped around: the planning process, conservation, community involvement, housing regulation and reservoirs.

Question 24 and the postcards asked for any other comments. Most responses grouped around: thoughts on the survey and planning process, groundwater, concerns about surface water supply, critique of current projects, conservation, quality of drinking water, stopping or reducing development, and water rates.

Conclusion

The fact that over 2500 residents took the time to respond to the survey and give their thoughtful and detailed comments indicates the high degree of interest of the community in water issues and suggests the importance of this regional planning effort. Many people expressed appreciation for the survey, and many encouraged further community involvement in the planning process. It is the intent of City of Santa Fe Water and Santa Fe County Utilities to continue to solicit community involvement and regularly report progress and information on the topics of interest.