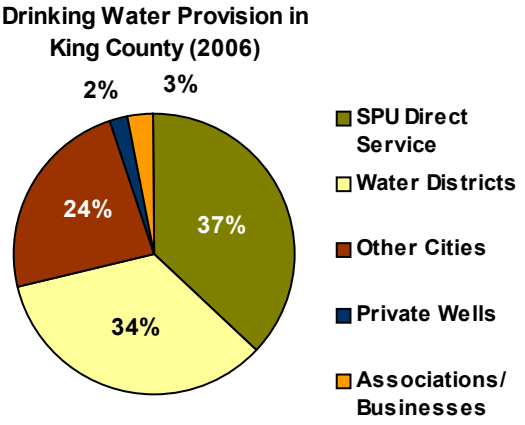
WATER CONSUMPTION
Outcome: Protect Water Quality and Quantity

Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

"Water supply shall be regionally coordinated to provide a reliable economic source of water and to provide mutual aid to and between all agencies and purveyors. The region should work toward a mechanism to address the long-term regional water demand needs of all agencies and water purveyors." (CO-5) "Aggressive conservation efforts shall be implemented to address the need for adequate supply for...water resources....Efforts shall include...public education, water reuse and reclamation, landscaping which uses native and drought-resistant plans and other strategies to reduce water consumption..."(CO-6) "Water reuse and reclamation shall be encouraged, especially for large commercial and residential developments, and for high water users such as parks, schools, golf courses, and locks." (CO-7)

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provides potable water for approximately 70% of King County's population, either through direct service or through wholesale provision by 27 other water utilities. Almost one-half of SPU's customers are direct, retail customers, with the remainder being wholesale customers. Nearly all of this water is supplied by the Cedar River Watershed and the South Fork Tolt River Watershed in eastern King County. The remaining King County population obtains their potable water from approximately 2,000 other public systems and 12,000 private wells.

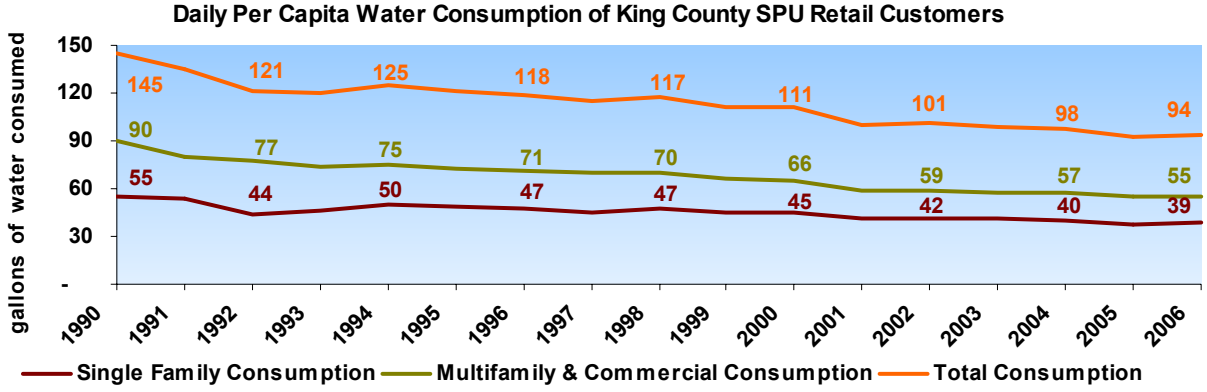
Figure 14.1



This indicator highlights SPU's retail consumption. Future reports should include more countywide data as water utilities begin routine reporting of water consumption and conservation information required under the new Water Use Efficiency rules adopted by the Washington State Department of Health effective January, 2007.

As figure 14.2 illustrates, SPU's retail customers decreased water consumption 35% over the last 16 years, with multifamily and commercial consumption showing a slightly greater decrease than single family consumption. The largest annual change in consumption occurred in 1992 as a result of severe drought conditions and mandatory water use restrictions. Since then, a number of factors have kept water demand down including higher water rates, conservation efforts and improved system operations.

Figure 14.2



While water consumption has shown a downward trend in the last several decades, annual fluctuations-- due partly to summer weather patterns in the region-- have occurred. The effect of weather can be seen in the 4% increase in water consumption in 2006, which recorded the driest summer months since 1976 accompanied by warmer than average temperatures.