

What is a Water Budget?

Water budgets are for informational purposes only and will not be used to calculate your utility costs.

With funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Peter Mayer with Water Demand Management and Western Resource Advocate, worked with Fort Collins Utilities' Water Conservation Staff to develop residential water budgets in 2021. Water budgets are a water management tool used to estimate the volume of water a building and/or a landscape will reasonably require through the year.

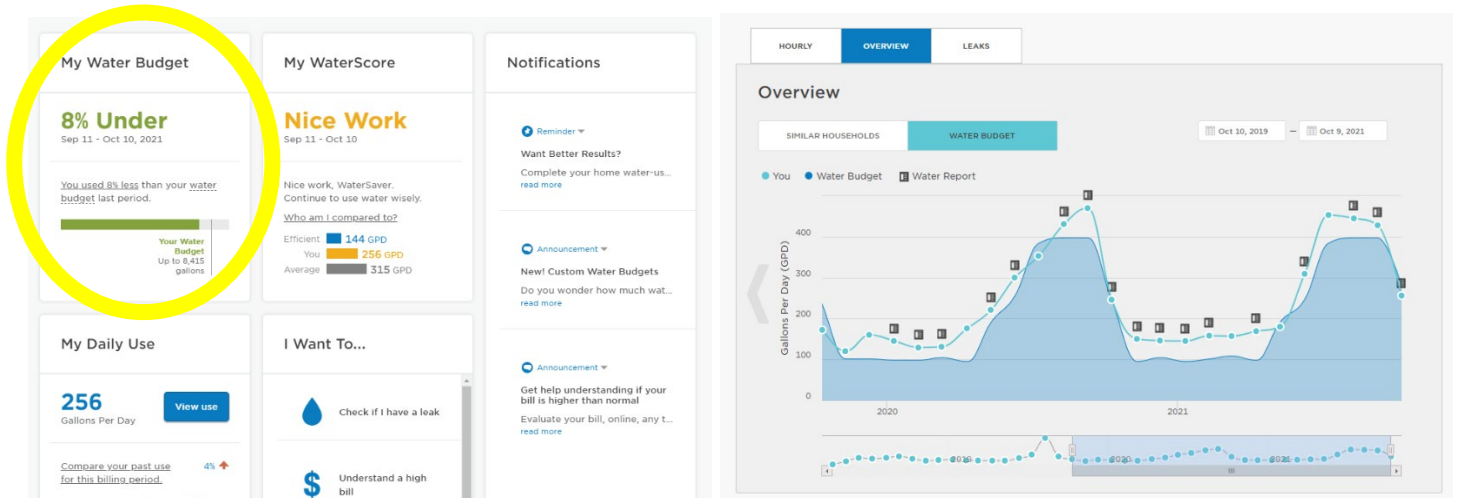
- The landscape water budget considers the size of the landscape, the landscape water requirement and seasonal adjustments.
- The building (indoor) water budget considers the number of people.

Who has a budget? About 29,000 single-family (detached) residential accounts in Fort Collins Utilities water service area and Fort Collins city limits. Homes constructed after 2020 or outside of the city limits do not currently have budgets.

What is the purpose of the budget? To provide a customized tool to help customers manage their water use.

What happens if I go over my budget, will I be charged a fee or a higher water rate on my bill?
No, budgets are informational only.

How do I find my budget? Your most recent budget status for the previous billing cycle is shown in the top left of the home screen. To review your historical use compared to your budget, Click on the 'You used XX% less/more' hyperlink in the 'My Water Budget' section. You can now view your budget going back in time.



What will my budget be next month? Your budget will be the same every month, from year to year, so you can look at past months budget amounts to determine future months budget amounts.

How were the budgets developed? Using historic billing data, county assessor data on bedroom size and lot size/building footprint, MyWater's household occupancy data (self-reported by registered customer) and GIS landcover data that measures irrigated area of properties.

INDOOR: The number of residents in the home was derived from two sources. It was either self-reported through Fort Collins' WaterSmart/MyWater software system or it was estimated based on the number of bedrooms in the home as reported in the Larimer County Tax Assessor dataset. The minimum number of residents/bedrooms was set at 2 and the maximum was set at 5. This resulted in indoor water budgets as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Indoor water budgets developed for Fort Collins

Residents or Bedrooms	Per Capita Use	Annual Indoor Budget	Monthly Indoor Budget
1 or 2	50 gpcd	36,500 gallons	3,042 gallons
3	50 gpcd	54,750 gallons	4,563 gallons
4	50 gpcd	73,000 gallons	6,084 gallons
5	50 gpcd	91,250 gallons	7,604 gallons

$$\# \text{ of residents} \times 50 \text{ gpcd} \times 365 \text{ days} = \text{annual indoor water budget}$$

Indoor budgets were spread evenly across each month of the year. Even though some months have fewer days, the billing cycle for water customers is typically 30 or 31 days.¹

OUTDOOR: Estimated irrigated area for most single-family accounts in Fort Collins was developed in 2016 as part of a landcover analysis project prepared by CSU. Additionally, more carefully constructed landscape area measurements were developed for a few hundred Fort Collins customers that recently participated in landscape programs.

Data from Larimer County Tax Assessor data set were used to fill in any missing estimates of irrigable area from the 2016 data set. The annual water application factor for each size category is shown in Table 3. These values, and the category boundaries, can be adjusted periodically as warranted to ensure the formulation meets the needs of Fort Collins' customers.

Table 2: Outdoor landscape water budgets by landscape size

	1	2	3	4	5
Estimated irrigated area (sq ft)	<=4,000 sf	4,000 - 10,000 sf	10,000 <20,000 sf	20,000 <44,000 sf	>44,000 sf
Gallons per Square Foot	9.4	5.6	4.4	2.5	0.5

Inches of Water	15.0	9.0	7.0	4.0	0.8
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Outdoor budgets were spread across the months from May – October, based on the outdoor use percentages calculated from Fort Collins customers. The annual outdoor budget was allocated as follows:

- May – 7%
- June – 12%
- July – 22%
- August – 25%
- September – 23%
- October – 11%

Why does my budget seem off? Check your household occupancy and yard area in MyWater by selecting ‘Who am I compared to’ in the My Water Score tile. You can review the current occupancy and yard size (irrigated area). If it is incorrect, you can select ‘Update profile’ and review and update. Your budget will not automatically update. You will need [submit a change request](#) to update the budget tool. All other comparisons and data on MyWater will be automatically updated.

Are water budgets the same thing as an allotment? In Fort Collins the term “water budgets” should be understood to be distinct from “water allotments,” which is the term Fort Collins uses to describe the amount of water required to serve a new property or development. The formulation and purpose of the water budgets described is distinct and separate from water allotments.