

Tooele County
Water Use and Preservation
General Plan Element
2026



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Introduction and Background:

The Utah State Legislature updated the state code regarding general plans (S.B. 110 (2022), S.B. 76 (2023)) and now requires all counties to include a Water Use and Preservation Element in their general plans. This legislation mandates 10 items, or resources, that must be addressed in the water use element. This document serves to consolidate resources and information **regarding the county's water use and water conservation into one place. Tooele County began the process of drafting the Water Use and Preservation Element in 2025.**

This Water Use Element is a component of the county's general plan. According to state code, a general plan is an advisory document that establishes a vision, influences growth, justifies ordinances, protects private property rights, and anticipates capital improvements. This Element summarizes conservation resources and techniques, and presents County-wide water use trends to inform land use decisions. The goal of the Water Use Element is to ensure that land use planning considers water availability and to promote collaboration that supports reliable water for all users now and in the future. While this Element focuses on unincorporated areas, county wide datasets are used where they best represent regional conditions. The Element is organized into the following sections: Water Resources, Agricultural Protection, and Drinking Water. Within these sections, similar concepts are grouped by desired outcomes.

Water Resources

Desired Outcome: Develop a Water Budget for County Water Uses

The water budget illustrates the effect of permitted development and development patterns on water demand and water infrastructure. It can be established by two components: 1) the difference between supply and demand, and 2) the estimated water usage by land use type. This method helps inform future water planning by determining how new development will impact the existing supply. This approach supports future development decisions that align with available supply.

Historical Water Usage and Growth

With a recent annual growth rate of 2.5% and a total increase of growth of 40% over the last 15 years, Tooele County is the fastest growing county in the state of Utah by percent of

population. The graph below shows the increasing population and number of retail water use connections served by public water systems in Tooele County as reported to the Division of Water Rights.

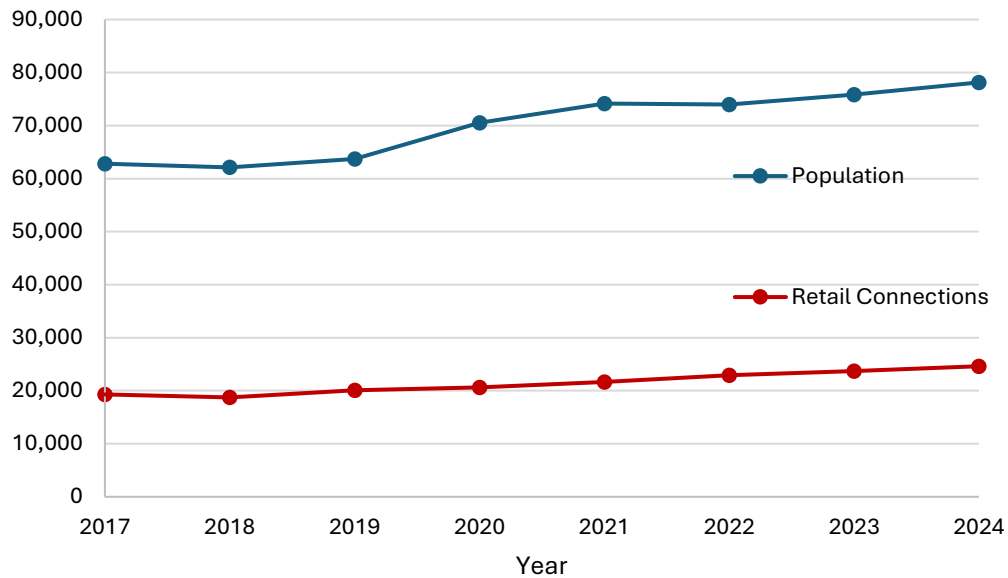


Figure 1: Recent Growth Trends in Tooele County

Similarly, water production from sources and retail use from public water systems have also been increasing over the last few years, which is illustrated by the graphs below. Retail water use reflects the volume of water reported to be billed to customers, whereas source water production refers to the total volume of water produced. The data also indicates a sufficient gap or buffer between retail use and source production.

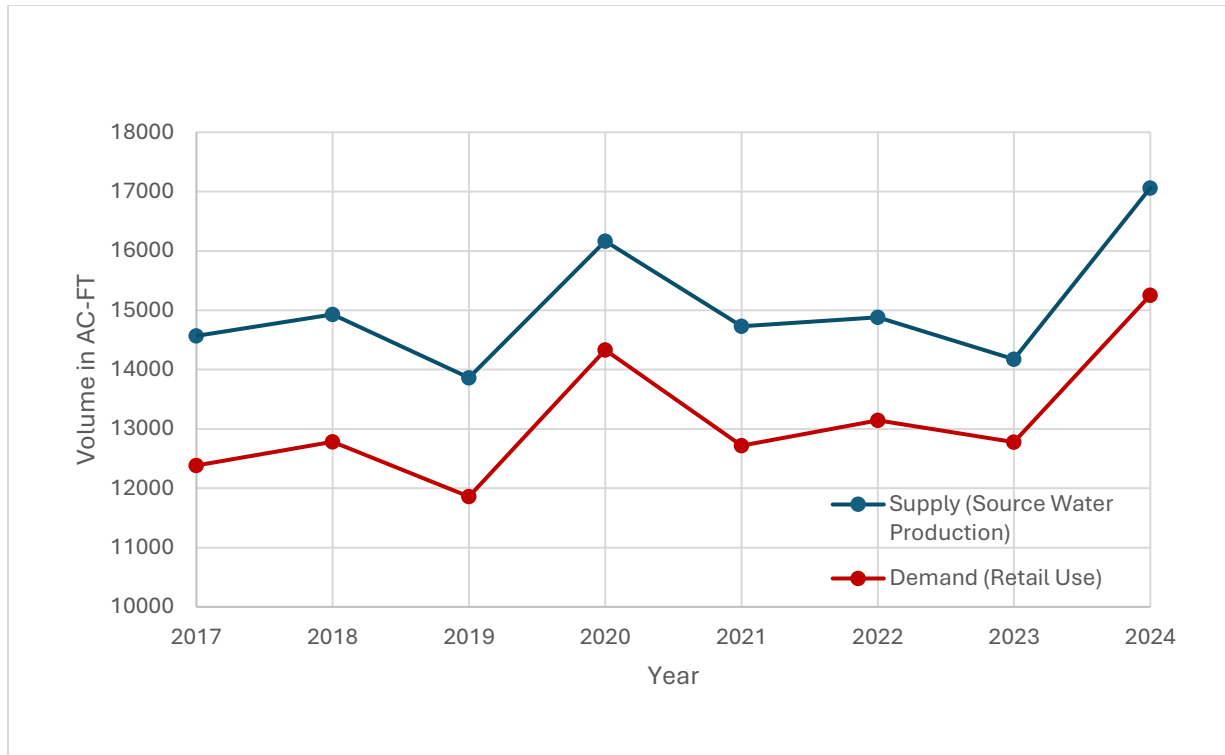


Figure 2: Recent Water Production and Retail Use from Public Water Systems in Tooele County

Additional information on historical water usage by land use type is summarized in the following sections.

Water Usage by Land Use Type

Overview of Land Use Trends

Land use trends were analyzed using Utah Geospatial Resource Center (UGRC) Water-Related Land Use data. This data was overlaid on public water system boundaries to estimate existing and future water use.

Between 2017 and 2023, within public water system boundaries:

- Land designated for agricultural use increased by about 4,700 acres (31%).
- Urban land increased by about 200 acres (1.4%).
- Other land uses decreased by about 6,500 acres (42%).

It is important to note:

- UGRC data utilizes field checks, but agricultural designation does not necessarily indicate active cultivation.
- Approximately 1.56 million acres (33% of the County) are used for military purposes.

Table 1 summarizes the changes in land use in Tooele County areas served by public water systems between 2017 and 2023. Figures 3 through 5 illustrate water related land use county-wide, water related land use near major municipalities, and military areas.

Table 1: Land Use Trends in Tooele County Within Public Water System Boundaries

Land Use Type	2017 (ac)	2023 (ac)
Urban	15,156	15,377
Agricultural	15,298	20,011
Other	15,262	8,896

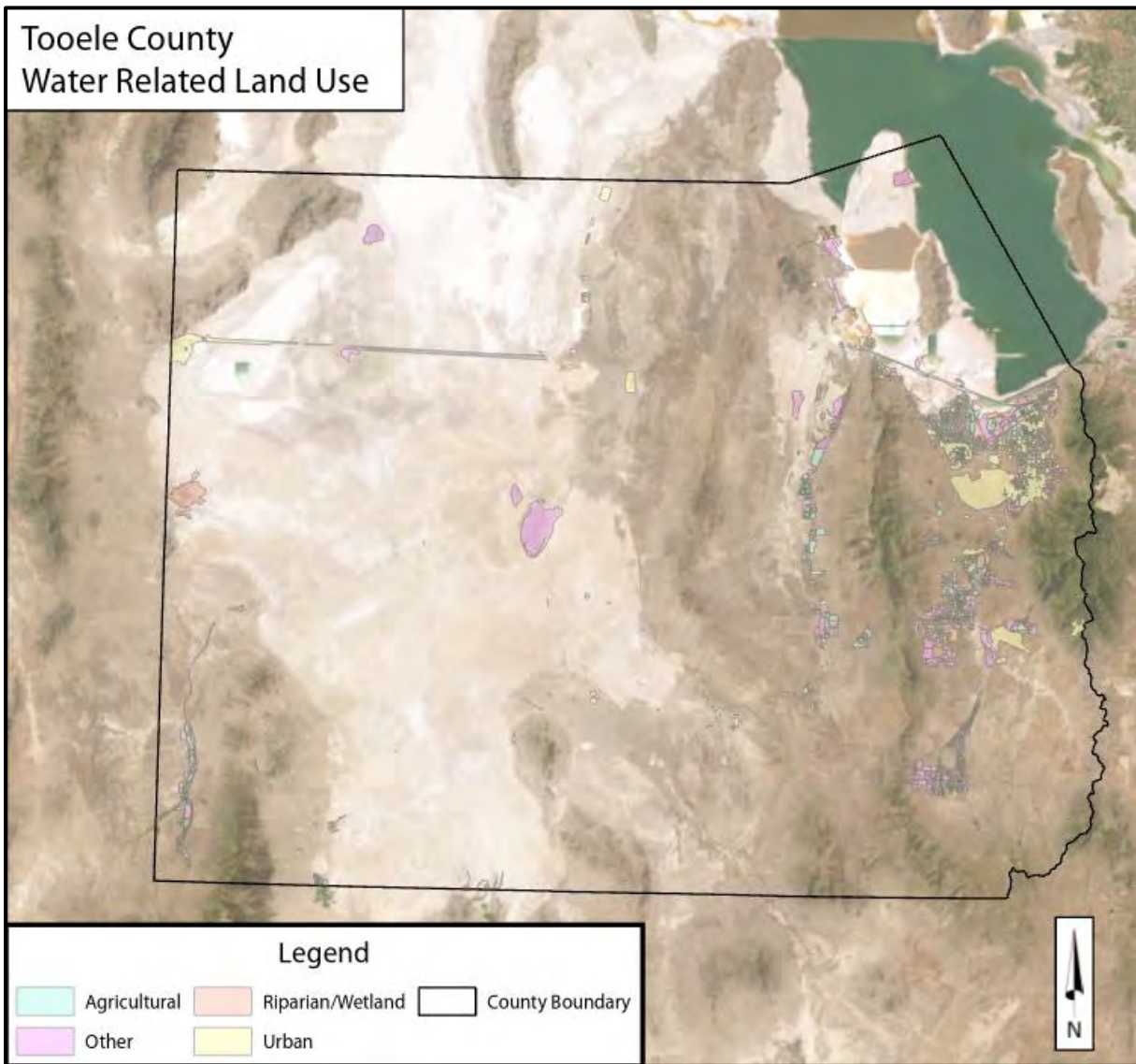


Figure 3: County-wide Water Related Land Use Data

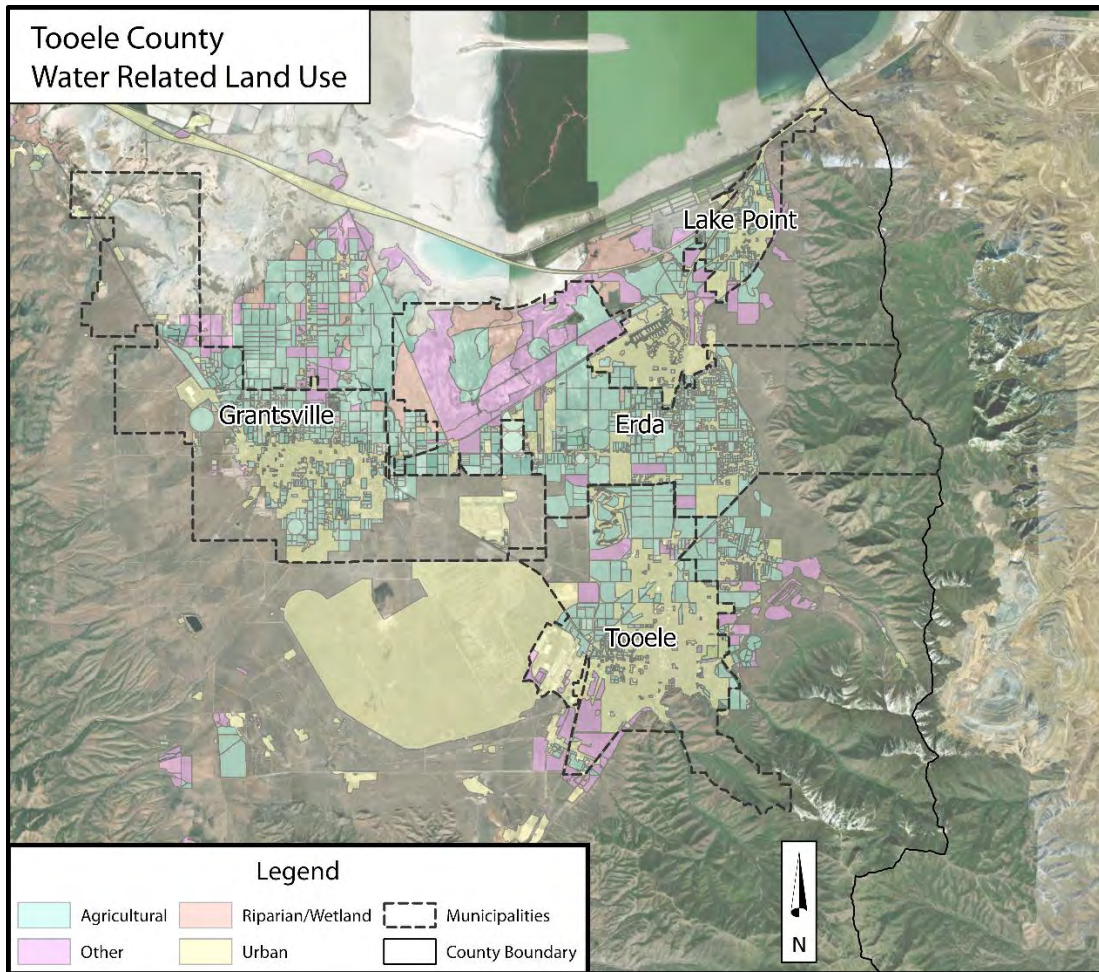


Figure 4: Water Related Land Use Data within Major Municipalities

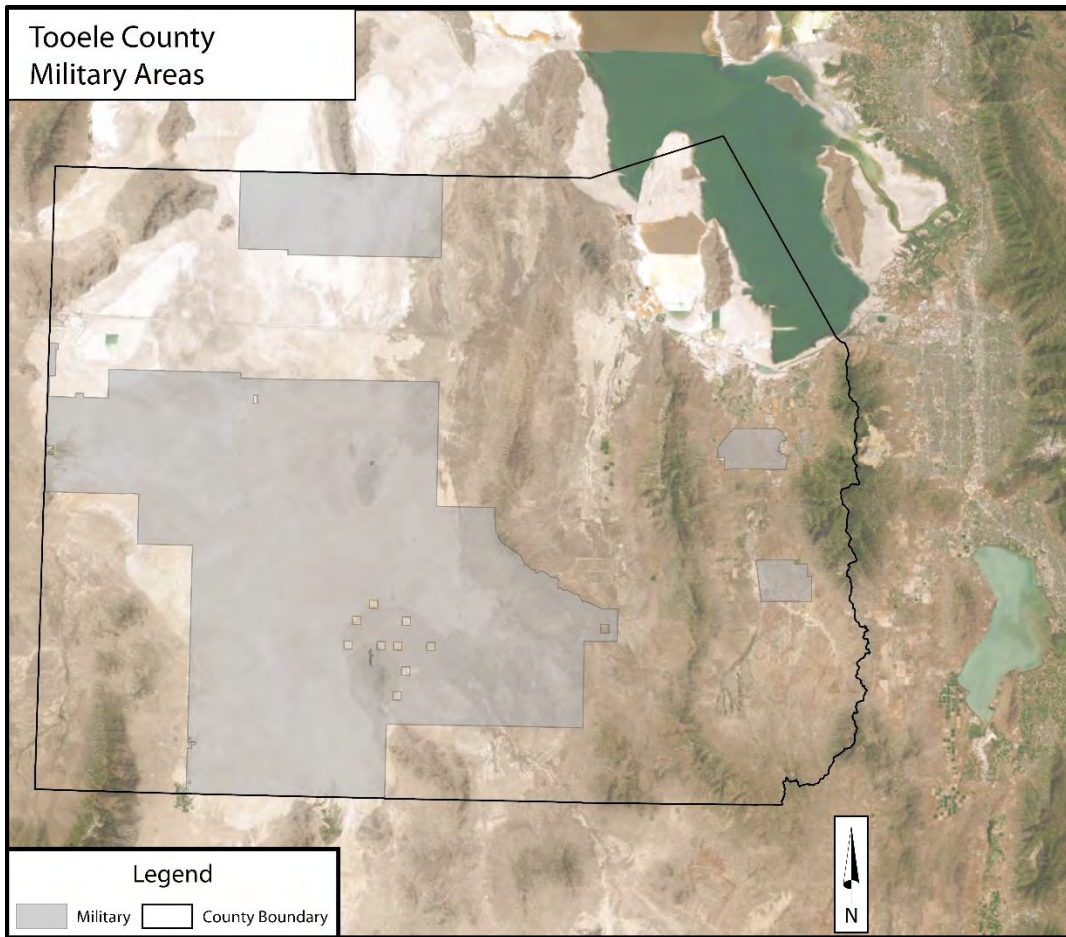


Figure 5: Military Areas in Tooele County

Table 2 summarizes trends in water usage per acre from 2017 to 2024 and is followed by additional information on urban and agricultural water usage.

Table 2: Water Usage per Acre Trends in Tooele County

Land Use	2017	2023	2024
Urban (ac-ft/ac)	0.96	0.92	1.11
Agricultural (ac-ft/irr-ac)	1.93	2.50	N/A ¹

1. No Water Related Land Use data available.

Urban Water Use

Urban development generally uses less water per acre than agriculture; however, population growth may increase overall drinking water demand and may require additional supply or conservation measures in the future. Urban water demand per acre for the areas served by public water systems was estimated using UGRC Land Use Data and reported usage from the Division of Water Rights.

Key Trends:

- Urban water use per acre shows a slight downward trend from 2017 to 2024, despite occasional spikes (see Figure 2 and Table 2).
- Indoor water demand will rise as population grows, even if overall per-acre use declines.
- Figure 6 illustrates the large difference in water use between agriculture and urban areas in Tooele County.

Planning Implications:

- Drinking water supply should prioritize indoor use and limit outdoor watering.
- Conservation strategies will be critical to sustain supply.

A summary of drinking water supply is provided in the *"Drinking Water"* section of this Element.

Agricultural Water Use

Agriculture typically consumes more water per acre than urban development. This means:

- When agricultural land converts to urban uses, overall water demand usually decreases.
- If agricultural land or irrigation increases, total water demand rises significantly.

Because actual county-wide agricultural water use data is not readily available, estimates for total usage and usage per acre were developed using published crop water needs (Hill, 2011, <https://waterrights.utah.gov/docImport/0545/05452313.pdf>) and UGRC crop-type mapping. These estimates are intended to show relative scale, not exact numbers. Trends for 2017 through 2023 are shown in Table 2.

Key Trends:

- Figure 6 illustrates the relative difference in water use between agriculture and urban areas in Tooele County.

- Agricultural water use appears to have increased from 80,000 ac-ft/year in 2017 to about 100,000 ac-ft/year in 2023 (see Figure 6).
- This increase occurred even though mapped actively farmed land decreased by roughly 1,200 acres. This increase is attributed to higher irrigation per acre based on the UGRC crop-type data and published crop water needs.
- These values are calculated estimates, not direct metering.
- Previous groundwater studies (Utah DWRI, 1996; Stolp, 2009) estimated annual Tooele Valley basin recharge/discharge at 60,000–80,000 ac-ft, suggesting the calculated agricultural usage may be high.
- Figure 6 should be viewed as illustrating relative magnitude, not exact usage.

Planning Implications:

- Agricultural demand will remain a major driver of water use.
- An increase in agricultural land will likely result in significantly increased irrigation demands.
- Efficiency improvements and crop selection strategies could help reduce irrigation needs.
- Additional discussion on agricultural protection is included in the *“Agricultural Protection”* section of this element.

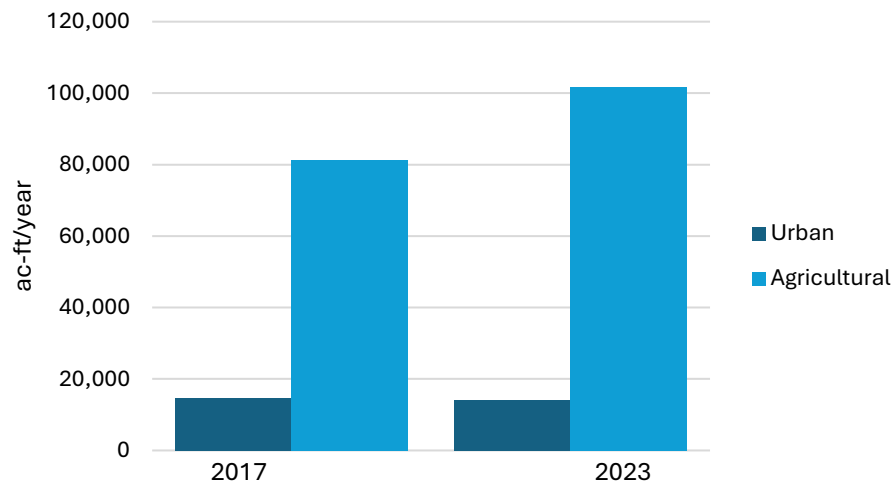


Figure 6: Urban and Agricultural Water Use Trends

Other Land Uses

Military land accounts for about 33% of Tooele County's area. Changes in activity may affect future demand. The County will continue collaborating with military land users and planners to be aware of future planning.

Future Planning Considerations

- Current public water system data indicates supply has met recent demand. Continued growth may increase pressure on supply.
- Additional studies may be needed to evaluate long-term water availability and impacts of development.
- Conservation efforts could be prioritized to reduce future demand. Strategies for reducing existing and future water demands are discussed in the following sections.

Desired Outcome: Reducing Water Demand and Per Capita Water Use for Existing Development

Tooele County residents have several opportunities to contribute to water conservation goals. A population that is well-educated on efficient water-use habits and practices is paramount to reducing future demand. Programs such as Utah Water Savers and Slow The Flow provide information on conservation practices. Some residents may be eligible for incentives for employing these practices. Incentive programs include but are not limited to the following:

- Waterwise landscaping incentives of up to \$3/sq-ft for removing grass and replacing it with waterwise landscaping for residents in Tooele City.
- Receiving up to \$100 for the installation of WaterSense smart controllers
- Receiving up to \$150 for replacing old toilets with WaterSense toilets

More information can be found under the following links:

<https://www.utahwatersavers.com/>

<https://slowtheflow.org/>

The *Utah Regional Municipal and Industrial (M&I) Water Conservation Goals Report* (HAL, Bowen Collins & Associates, 2019, <https://conservewater.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Regional-Water-Conservation-Goals-Report-Final.pdf>) also provides recommendations specifically for reducing indoor water use with the following examples:

- Conversion, or new installation of fixtures (toilets, faucets, shower heads)
- Conversion, or new installation of appliances (washing machines, dishwashers) to models with higher efficiency
- Identifying and repairing indoor leaks
- Changing indoor water use habits

While the above programs are aimed at residential water users, agricultural users can significantly contribute to reducing water demands. Efficiency estimates by Utah State University show that:

- Drip and sub-surface irrigation methods can achieve efficiencies in the 90% range.
- Sprinklers and flood irrigation can have efficiencies as low as 70% and 50% respectively.

The County encourages drip or sub-surface irrigation where feasible to improve efficiency.

Desired Outcome: Reducing Water Demand and Per Capita Water Use for Future Development

Recommended Policy and Ordinance Changes

Future water demands are best reduced through changes in ordinances. The County can influence future demand through policies and ordinances that encourage efficient use and discourage waste. The following are recommendations of ways that Tooele County can change their current policy to encourage water savings, with a recommended timeline in Table 3:

- Limit lawn or turf in County-managed landscapes, including in park strips. The County could also implement this outside of County-managed areas by updating land-use regulations for new developments and encouraging turfgrass conversion in existing developments.
- Promote site-specific landscape design in new developments that decreases stormwater runoff or utilizes runoff water for irrigation.
- Regulate ponds, pools and other features that promote unnecessary water evaporation, both in existing and future development.
- Promote efficient irrigation systems such as drip and smart irrigation systems that provide the optimal amount of water.
- Consider low water use landscaping standards for new commercial, industrial, institutional, or multifamily housing developments.

Table 3: Implementation Timeline for Recommended Ordinances

Recommended Ordinance	Recommended Timeline	Description/Benefit
Updated land-use regulations in County managed areas	2030	Reduction in lawn & turf areas in county parks reduces irrigation demand.
Efficient Irrigation Systems	2030	More efficient irrigation systems will reduce wasteful outdoor watering.
Evaporation Control	2035	Evaporation control measures will significantly reduce water loss from pools and ponds, particularly during the summer months.
Site-specific Landscaping	2035	Consider requiring new development to submit water-wise landscaping concepts to minimize future water demands.

Salt Lake County’s water conservation web resources and interactive maps that provide information on water districts and water savings programs represent regional best practices (<https://www.saltlakecounty.gov/regional-development/Environmental-Sustainability/water/>). It is recommended that Tooele County explore creating a similar public-facing website.

Desired Outcome: Reducing and Eliminating Wasteful Water Practices by modifications to Local Government Operations

Water conservation starts from within. The County can reduce consumption and demonstrate best practices through operations. Examples of some modifications that can be made to Tooele County’s operations included but are not limited to:

- Track and evaluate County facility water use
- Optimize irrigation schedules, including considering beginning irrigation later in the year and stopping earlier
- Conduct routine irrigation system checks for leaks and inefficiency
- Use mechanical sweeping (brooms and leaf blowers) instead of hose washing to clean sidewalks and driveways where feasible
- Install smart sprinkler systems in county parks and green areas and adjust irrigation based on weather conditions.

Salt Lake County’s “flip the strip” initiative, which aims to reduce water use by retrofitting park strips and replacing the turfgrass with water-wise landscaping, demonstrates landscape conversion at scale. The County could evaluate similar opportunities within County facilities.

Desired Outcome: Minimizing the Impact on the Great Salt Lake

The Great Salt Lake is a large body of water that is both economically and environmentally critical to the state of Utah and the broader region. Conserving its ecosystem and ensuring long-term sustainability is a priority. Declining lake levels pose environmental and economic risks. Tooele County lies entirely within the Great Salt Lake Watershed, meaning that any water that is diverted or wasted, especially through inefficient irrigation practices, reduces the flows that ultimately reach the Great Salt Lake. Tooele County can actively participate in the preservation of the Great Salt Lake by implementing the water-saving strategies recommended in this Water Use Element. Tooele County recognizes the importance of reducing water uses that have demands and are ultimately more impactful to Great Salt Lake. These high demands are often associated with outdoor water usage and strategies focused on reducing outdoor demands will be a point of emphasis.

Desired Outcome: Achieving Regional Water Conservation Goals through the General Plan Water Element

The *Utah Regional Municipal and Industrial (M&I) Water Conservation Goals Report* presents a collection of regional goals and practices for residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial water use. **This report is to guide the state's water industry in planning future infrastructure, policies, and programs consistent with Utah's semi-arid climate and growing demand.** Achieving these goals will require effort and participation from the County, the public water suppliers, and the residents of Tooele County.

According to the Utah's Regional M&I Water Conservation Goals report, Tooele County is located in the Salt Lake Region. This region's goal is to reduce water use per capita to 187 gallons per day (gpd) by 2030 and to 178 gpd by 2040. The graph below illustrates recent water uses per capita in Tooele County.

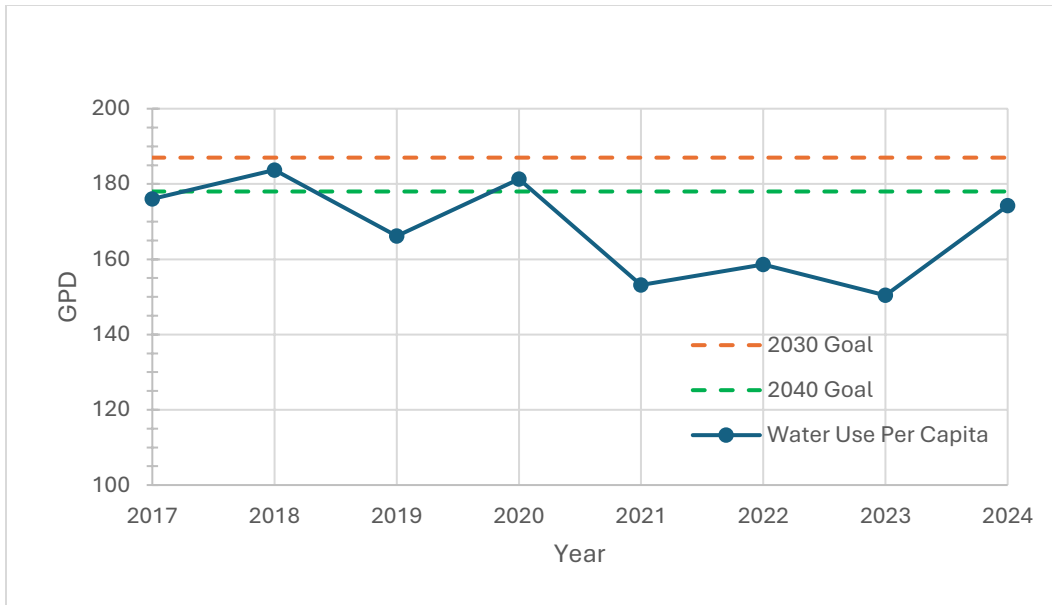


Figure 7: Water Use per Capita in Tooele County from 2017-2024

Current trends indicate Tooele County is on course to meet the regional water conservation goals set for 2030 and 2040. Implementing the conservation measures recommended in this Element will help to reduce outdoor and indoor water use and ensure that future conservation goals are met on a consistent basis.

Communities that need to adopt water conservation plans:

The Water Conservation Act requires each water conservancy district and public water system with over 500 connections to submit an updated water conservation plan every five (5) years. Based on these criteria, the water systems within Tooele County that are required to submit water conservation plans are listed in the table below. Although the military areas in Tooele County are not required to submit a water conservation plan per the Water Conservation Act, the County aims to include these areas in future coordination and conservation efforts.

Table 4: Communities that require Water Conservation Plans

Water System Name	Latest Water Conservation Plan Submittal
Grantsville City Corporation	2022
Oquirrh Mountain Water Company	N/A ¹
Stansbury Park Improvement District	2022
Tooele City Water Special Service District	2021

1. Oquirrh Mountain Water Company recorded more than 500 connections for the first time in 2021 and is now required to adopt a water conservation plan.

Agricultural Protection

Agriculture is a significant land use in Tooele County. In 2017, land use data from UGRC indicated that about 41,000 acres were designated for agricultural use while in 2023, that number rose to about 62,000 acres. This trend is contrary to other counties in Utah, and the mapping designation does not mean that the land was used for agriculture. Data analysis indicates the number of *irrigated* acres decreased slightly from 2017 to 2023.

Desired Outcome: Protecting Agricultural Areas and Facilitating Agricultural Easements

Tooele County supports the preservation of agricultural areas. Currently, there are about 4,300 acres under protection and the County will consider additional proposals for protection areas. According to Tooele County code (4-6-6), agricultural protection areas must be located in an agricultural or multi-use zone district and consist of at least 100 contiguous acres. Proposals to create agricultural protection areas can be filed with the Community Development Department. Figure 8 shows the existing areas under protection, most of which are around Erda. Table 5 also shows the landowners of the respective protected areas.

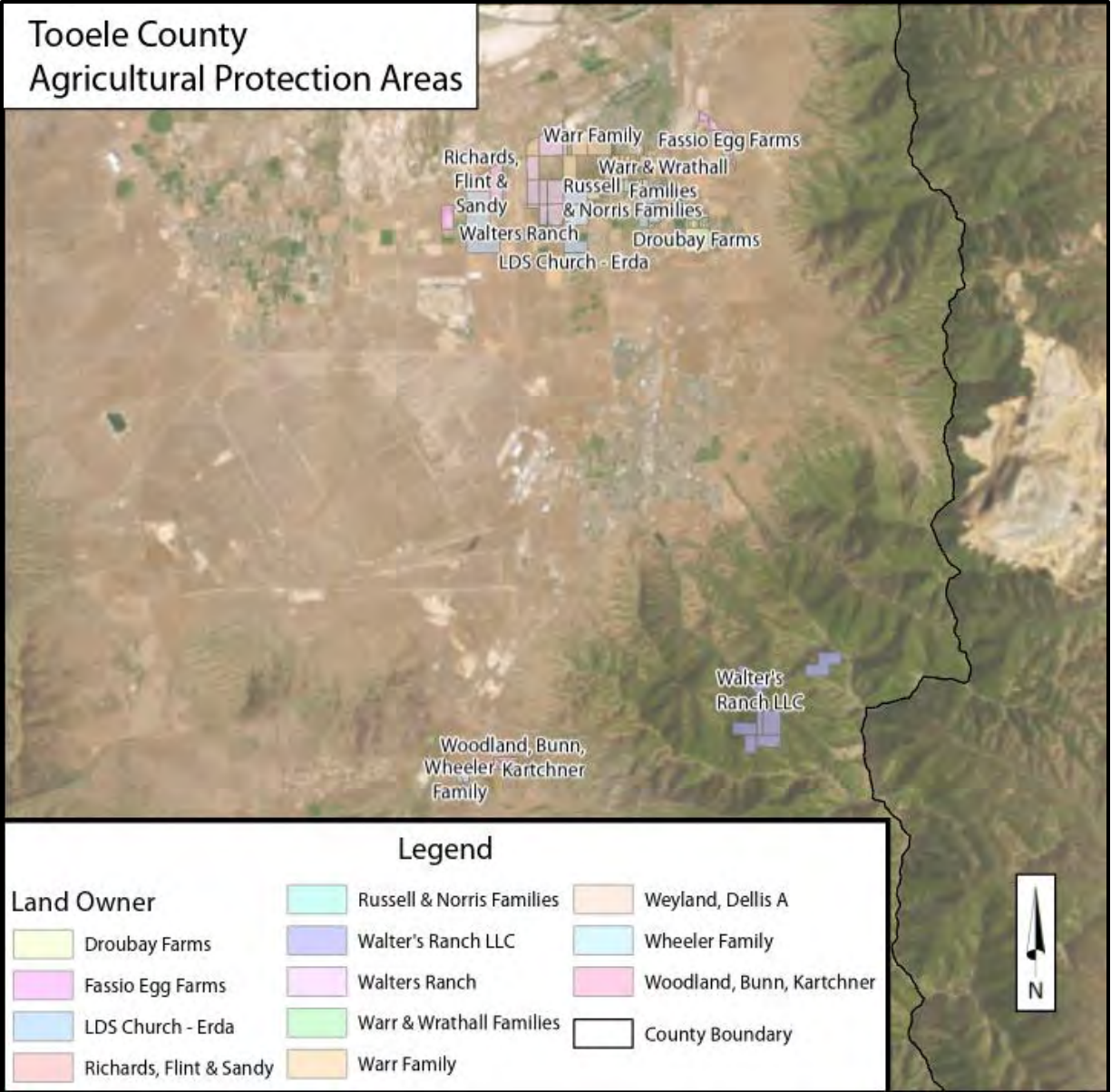


Figure 8: Agricultural Protection Areas in Tooele County

Table 5: Agricultural Protection Area Landowners

Landowner	Acres
Droubay Farms	296
Fassio Egg Farms	206
LDS Church - Erda	1,134
Richards, Flint & Sandy	98
Russell & Norris Families	59
Walters Ranch	950
Walter's Ranch LLC	663
Warr & Wrathall Families	14
Warr Family	697
Weyland, Dellis A	70
Wheeler Family	39
Woodland, Bunn, Kartchner	81
Total	4,307

In addition to providing opportunities to put land under agricultural protection, Tooele County also provides agricultural conservation easements, as shown in Figure 9. Tooele County is exploring potential uses for taxes collected through the Greenbelt Rollback tax program.

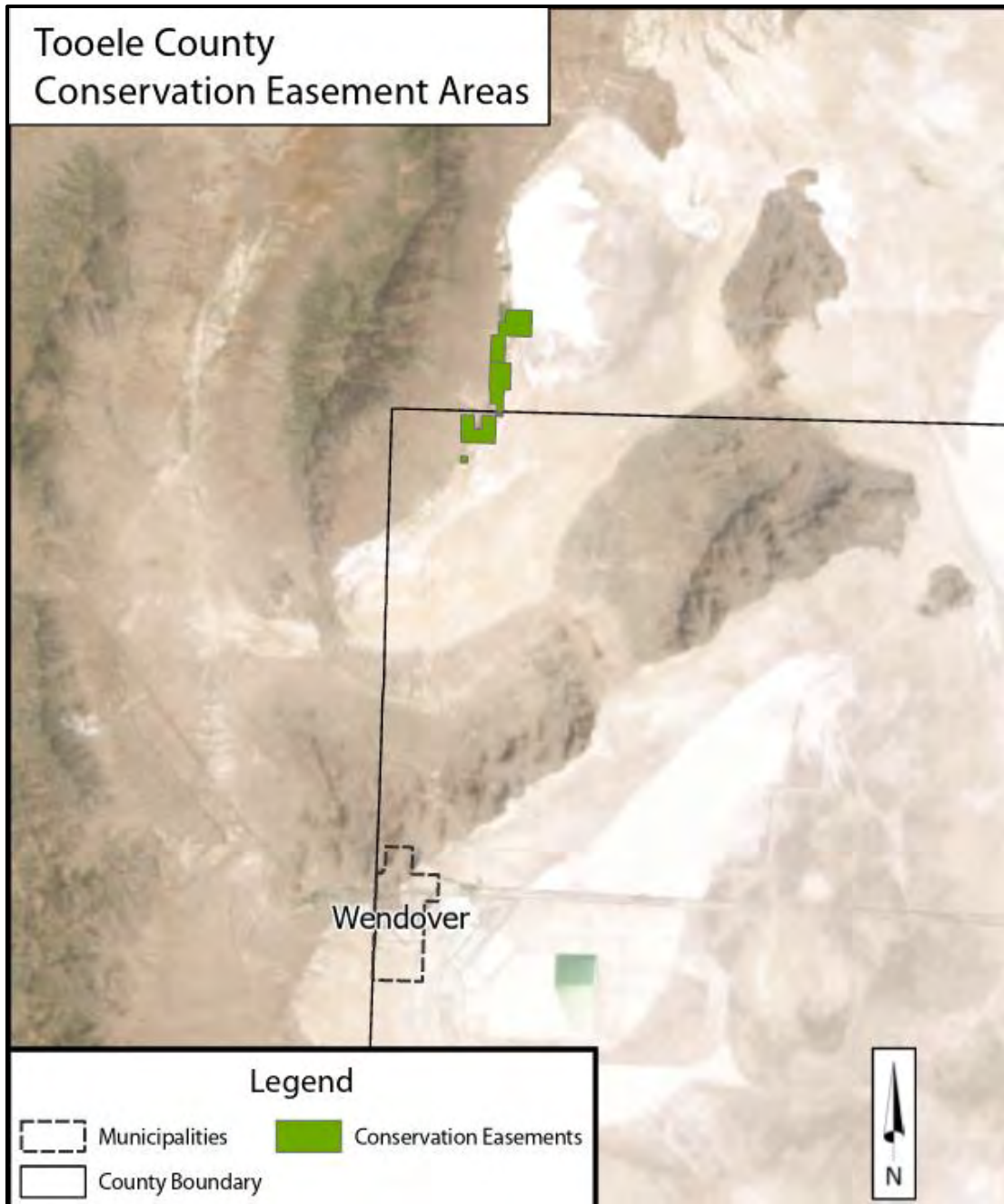


Figure 9: Conservation Easements Areas in Tooele County

Desired Outcome: Identifying Irrigation/Canal Companies with Delivery Systems within the County

Tooele County supports protection of irrigation and canal facilities on public lands and encourages management practices that prioritize efficiency and conservation. The table below provides a contact list of irrigation and canal companies within Tooele County.

Table 6: Tooele County Irrigation and Canal Companies - Contact Information

Company	Address	Phone	Main Contact
Erda Mobile Estates Water District ¹	4455 North Skyline Circle, Erda, 84074	435-882-7431	Bernadine Robinson
E.T. Irrigating Canal Company	4700 W Daybreak Parkway	435-730-3518	Julie LeFevre
Grantsville Irrigation Company	42 North Taylor Road, Grantsville, 84029	435-884-3451	Bodee Paulick
Hickman Creek Irrigation Company	18 N Johnson St, Stockton, 84071	435-882-2155	William J. Hogan
Lincoln Culinary Water Corp	1870 Walker Lane, Lincoln, 84074	801-870-7669	Gary Walker
Lower Clover Irrigation Company ¹	365 W Utah Avenue, Tooele, 84074	435-840-2118	Mark Warburton
Middle Canyon Irrigation Company ¹	412 E 500 N, Tooele, 84074	435-843-9630	William Madole
Ophir Canyon Water Association ¹	14572 South 790 West, Bluffdale, 84065	801-756-5123	Walt Shuvert
Settlement Canyon Irrigation Company ¹	261 Julie Ann Court, Tooele, 84074	435-833-9606	Kristin West
Soldier Canyon Water Company	18 N Johnson St, Stockton, 84071	435-882-2922	Ruth Sweat
St. John Irrigation Company ¹	681 West 200 South, Tooele, 84074	435-837-2169	Janet Wyman
Terra Water Corporation ¹	49 Columbine LNPOB 185, Dugway, 84022	435-837-2328	Andre DeCarlo
Upper Clover Irrigation Company ¹	166 Johnson Lane, Rush Valley, 84069	435-830-8361	Geneil Russell
Vernon Irrigation Company	20 N Main St, Vernon, 84080	435-839-3407	Jalynn Livingston

1. Some company status information is pending; the County will update contacts as verified.

The County requires applicants for new developments to coordinate with affected irrigation and canal companies to protect their facilities. Figure 10 and Figure 11 show mapping of the locations and service areas of irrigation and canal companies in Tooele County. Mapping of the canal systems is available from the Utah Division of Water Rights on the Canal Safety

Program and Canal Inventory website at <https://waterrights.utah.gov/canalinfo/>. Service areas and associated water rights for several canal companies are displayed in Table 7.

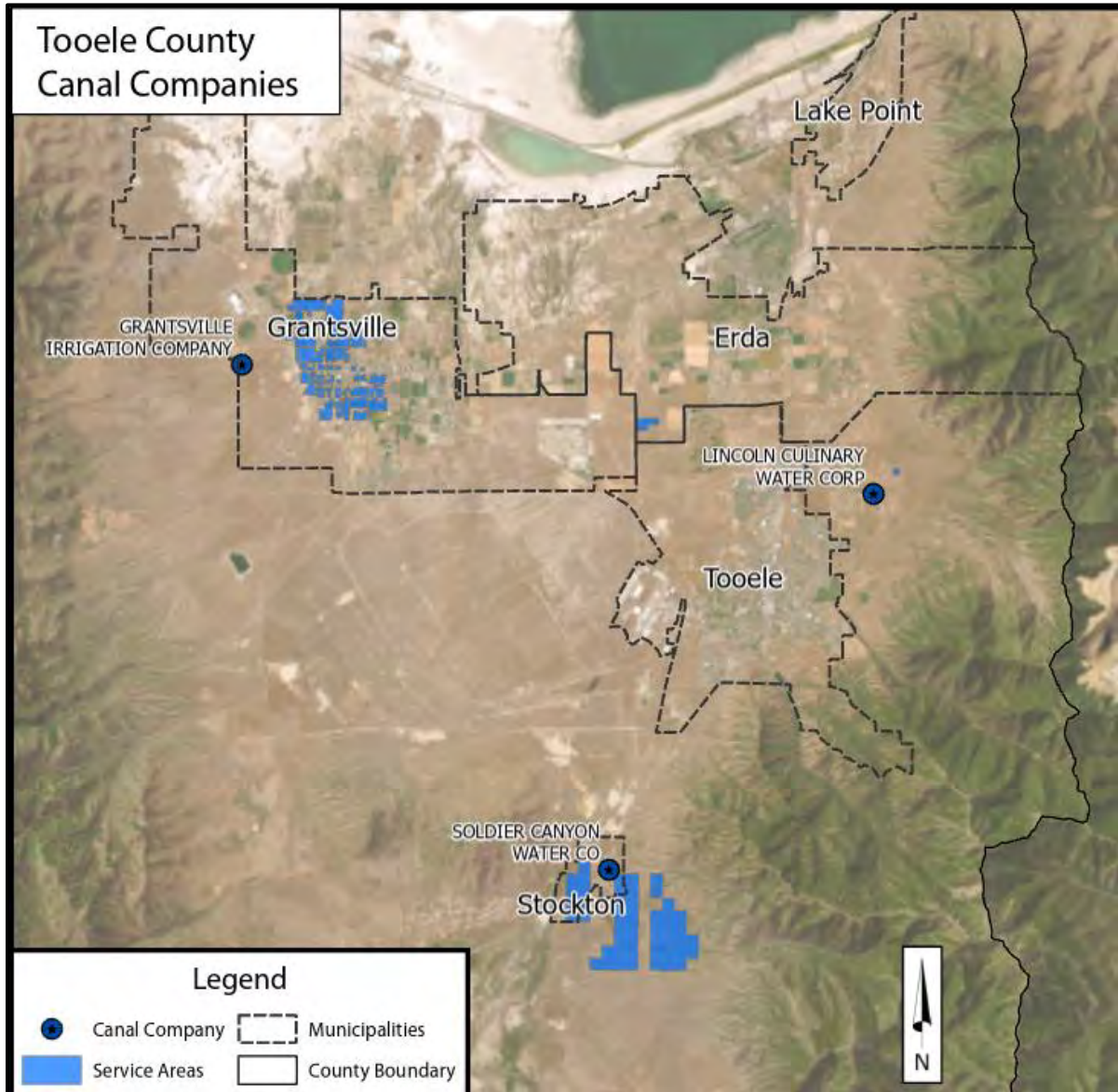


Figure 10: Irrigation/Canal Companies and Service Areas in Tooele County

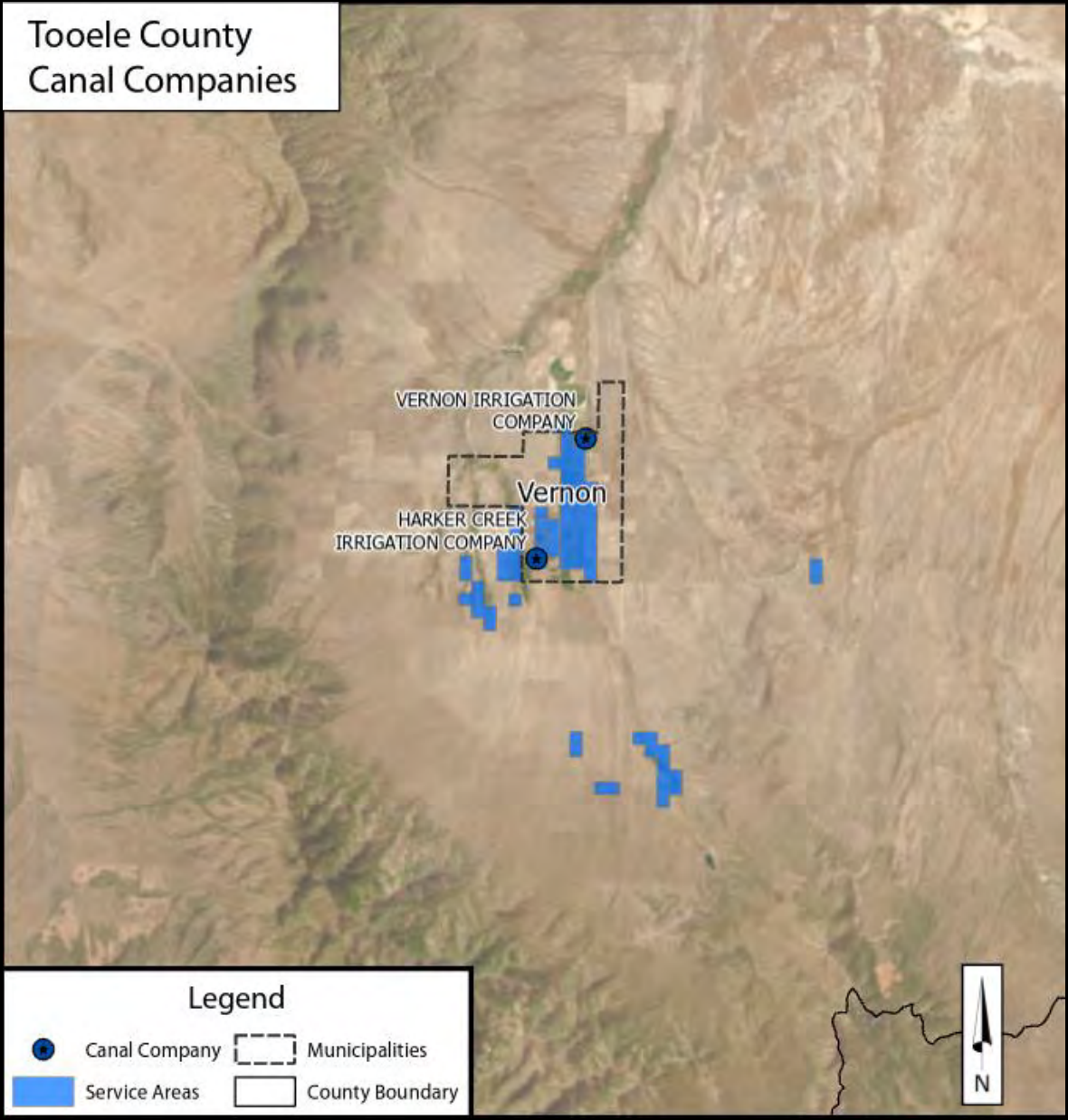


Figure 11: Irrigation/Canal Companies and Service Areas in Tooele County

Table 7: Service Areas and Water Rights of Irrigation/Canal Companies in Tooele County

Company	Service Area (Acres)	Water Rights
Grantsville Irrigation Co.	1,459	15-284, 15-502, 15-625
Harker Creek Irrigation Co.	1,086	15-2264
Vernon Irrigation Co.	1,978	15-1 to 15-3, 15-93, 15-2237, 15-2287
Lincoln Culinary Water Corp.	13	15-298, 15-1653, 15-2307
Soldier Canyon Water Co.	1,916	15-7

Desired Outcome: Establishing Water-Efficient Irrigation Practices on Farms and within Irrigation Water Delivery Systems

The Agricultural Water Optimization Program ([Agricultural Water Optimization Program | Utah Department of Agriculture and Food](#)) is a program run by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food whose goal is to optimize the use of water resources while maintaining viable agriculture. This is accomplished by reducing water use and inefficient irrigation processes. The program provides funding to agricultural entities for upgrading their infrastructure and practices. Program reports provide case studies of completed projects that may inform local practices.

Some examples of the strategies to promote agricultural efficiency are as follows:

- Irrigation System Conversions
- Data-Based Irrigation Scheduling
- Irrigation Automation
- Variable Rate Irrigation
- Low Elevation Spray Application/Low Energy Precision Application for Center Pivots
- Deficit Irrigation
- Tillage to Control Runoff
- Conservation Tillage (No-Till & Strip-Till)

Desired Outcome: Coordinate with Cities to Protect the Delivery Systems' Integrity and Public Health:

The General Plan Draft Water Element was presented at public meetings. Irrigation and canal companies were invited to attend public meetings and review and comment on the draft element.

Drinking Water

There are 18 public drinking water systems within Tooele County. The table below shows the source capacity in gallons per minute (gpm) and storage capacity in gallons (gal) for each drinking water system based on data provided by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (<https://waterlink.utah.gov/>).

Table 8: Drinking Water Source and Storage Capacity

Water System	Source Capacity (gpm)	Storage Capacity (gallons)
Dugway Proving Grounds/Carr Facility	610	366,600
Dugway Proving Grounds/ Ditto Tech Center	547	567,800
Dugway Proving Grounds/ English Village	2,550	1,200,000
Erda Acres Water Company	1,175	1,100,000
Grantsville City Corporation	6,420	5,925,000
Last Chance Ski Ranch	11	8,000
Lincoln Culinary Water	722	407,000
Ophir Water Association	99	120,000
Oquirrh Mountain Water Company	1,515	3,022,500
Oquirrh Point Improvement District	141	350,000
Silver Spurs Water Company	200	260,000
South Rim Water System	1,200	500,000
Stansbury Park Improvement District	9,883	6,100,000
Stockton Municipal Water System	664	1,266,156
Tooele Army Depot (North)	1,125	2,341,534
Tooele Army Depot (South)	975	1,000,000
Tooele City Water Special Service District	13,840	15,000,000
Vernon Water Works	55	150,000
Wendover Municipal Water System	565	1,093,228
Total	43,000	40,778,000

Desired Outcome: Diversifying Water Supply

Water providers in Tooele County currently utilize wells, springs, and surface water to serve drinking water and irrigation needs. Diversifying supply sources can reduce reliance on single-source systems and improve resilience to drought, infrastructure outages, and climate variability. Diversification also helps alleviate pressure on underground aquifers, which are increasingly at risk of depletion due to over pumping and insufficient recharge. The County supports provider-led diversification and conservation initiatives that protect groundwater reserves while meeting demand.

Desired Outcome: Consider the Benefits of Regionalization

Regionalization is sometimes understood as consolidating water systems under one entity. Cooperation can take many forms, including simple measures that improve reliability without changing governance. The County recommends public water suppliers consider emergency interconnections between systems. Emergency interconnections allow independent water systems to share water temporarily during shortages or emergencies. This approach improves emergency **resilience while preserving each system's** autonomy.

Several past studies have addressed regional water and sewer planning. While sewer is outside the scope of this Water Use Element, these resources included projections for future water needs and may offer useful context for future coordination:

- Tooele Central Valley Water and Sanitary Sewer Regionalization Study (HAL, 2018)
- Wastewater Regionalization Plan for Northern Tooele Valley (HAL, 2017)
- Tooele County Septic System Density Study (HAL, 2016)

Desired Outcome: Consultation with Community Water Systems within Unincorporated Areas of the County

The General Plan Draft Water Element was presented at public meetings. Representatives of public drinking water systems were invited to attend public meetings and review and comment on the draft element.

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