

## Proposed waterslide event stirs drought concerns

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This summer, a Utah-based events company called Slide the City would like to set up a 1,000-foot water slide in Fresno and other California towns, though drought concerns have prompted scrutiny from the state. A Utah-based events company planning to bring a giant inflatable water slide to the City of Fresno has had to put its plan on hold until it can come to an agreement with the state of California.

[Slide the City](#) is looking to visit a dozen California cities this summer but faced backlash from drought shamers when the group announced its plans late last year. Now the group says it is working with the state Environmental Health Department to create a plan for recycling the water once the water-slide event ends.

“With the state in such a water crunch, it’s been difficult to get people on board with [Slide the City],” said Tommy Peterson, event director.

For the event, the group sets up a 1,000-foot water slide on a street with a 35 to 85-foot incline. A pool technician is present to monitor chlorine levels in the water and insure sanitary conditions.

Riders must slide down using some sort of inflatable raft. Special foam panels also help cushion riders as they slide, Peterson said.

The team behind Slide the City has hosted events in Fresno before, including the Color Me Rad runs at Woodward Park. While those events were met with positive community support, the organization’s water-slide plans are drawing the ire of those who see the event as a frivolous waste, and the state is now requiring the company to provide a

detailed plan for how it will recycle the water used for the slide.

“Our corporate office is working with them and we hope to have a solution quickly,” Peterson said. According to the group's website, the events are family-friendly and designed to encourage people to have fun and enjoy their community while fulfilling childhood fantasies of rushing down the longest slip-and-slide around. The events generated a lot of positive buzz in Salt Lake City and Boise last year, but the slide's water usage, which Peterson estimates to be between 12,000 and 16,000 gallons each day, has made it less welcome in drought-stricken California.

Sarge Green with the California Water Institute at Fresno State said the average Fresno household uses 210 gallons per day. By that math, he estimated 16,000 gallons could sustain a single home for 76 days. In the ag industry, however, 16,000 represents a much smaller drop in the bucket, providing about 1 percent of the amount of water needed to grow an acre of almonds.

Hosting a giant slip-and-slide event during the fifth-consecutive year of drought has therefore struck some as crass, and an online petition protesting Slide the City's efforts in California cities has generated more than 1,300 pledges of support since going live on [Care2](#), a website dedicated to promoting green lifestyle causes.

Peterson said Slide the City is aware of the group's reasons for protesting, but is confident that once the state accepts its plans for recycling water and the public is notified of the details, communities will allow the events to take place.

“People are wondering about it because in their eyes we're wasting water,” he said. “I think 99 percent of people are pretty reasonable and compared to other venues it's not a lot of water. If people knew what was going on, I think, people would be okay with it.”

He said the group had been looking to host the event at Woodward Park and part of their recycling plan may involve using the water for landscaping needs.

City of Fresno Parks Department Director Manuel Mollinedo said the city was not aware of the group's water-recycling plan and had only recently received paperwork for the proposed event.

“We're extremely concerned about the drought issue,” he said. “Last summer, the department cut back on watering at city parks and I would be concerned if this program were to go through in the middle of the summer when the drought is at its worst.”

When the department was initially contacted by Slide the City, Mollinedo said the group proposed hosting the event in central Fresno, a move that would require the city to shut down several streets for a whole day.

“I haven't seen anything about their plans for Woodward Park, but there is a concern because Woodward has a lot of trees and there is the potential for damage,” he said.

While Mollinedo said city administrators will not have an official stance on the event until the state makes its decision, Peterson said the organization is anxious to be in California communities by the end of summer.

“We've been very pleased with the responses we've had from other communities so far,” he said. “Fresno is a great city and we'd love to host this event.”

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