

CASE STUDY: SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Program Name: Santa Barbara County Regional Water Efficiency Program

Agency Name: Santa Barbara County Water Agency

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Number of Customers: 18 water purveyors; county population of 399,347

Program Description:

This program promotes water use efficiency to local residents, and provides assistance to local water purveyors. The program provides coordination for cooperative efforts among purveyors, acts as a clearinghouse for information on water efficiency technology, and monitors legislation concerning efficient water use.

The program's activities fulfill - on a regional level - the obligations for the best management practices in the California Urban Water Conservation Council's memorandum of understanding and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's water conservation criteria. The Water Agency is a signatory to the memo and has prepared a conservation plan for Reclamation. Many of the regional activities also help individual purveyors to satisfy their own conservation goals under the memo and the Reclamation criteria.

Program Beginning: 1990

Target Audience:

The program has two target audiences:

- a. The 18 local water purveyors that are contacted numerous times throughout the year to participate in the joint outreach programs offered through the Regional Water Efficiency Program.
- b. The general public that is reached through the joint participation of the water purveyors and Water Agency in public events. In Fiscal Year 2000/2001, approximately 16,000 customers at the 14 public events attended by staff and countless others were reached through our classroom presentations, media advertising and direct mail programs.

Program Cost and Funding:

Materials Cost: \$90,000

Staff Time: \$48,000 (Two Program Specialists and a Public Information Assistant dedicate approximately 65 hours of staff time per week in support of this program.)

Funding Sources: Include a dedicated portion of Santa Barbara's one percent property tax and numerous grants.

Program Components:**IN-SCHOOL EDUCATION RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS**

Water Activities Manual: Teacher's guide and student workbook distribution

Teacher's Guide to Free Resources: Provides teachers with information about classroom presentations, field trips, videos and water education materials offered by the Water Agency and each of the purveyors within the county.

Water Awareness High School Video Contest: All eligible high schools are invited to submit a two-to five-minute video focused on drinking water issues. No professional assistance is allowed. First prize is \$1500; second prize is \$1000; and third is \$500. All participants receive \$200.

Workshop: Project WET: Special training workshop for teachers using the curriculum called Project WET.

Summer Teachers' Conference: Staff set up a booth at the Summer Teachers' Conference and distributed all of the support materials for educators supplied by the Water Agency and water purveyors in the county.

Classroom Presentations: Staff used grant funding from Reclamation to purchase a Groundwater Model and two Water Puzzles for use in classroom presentations by all purveyors in the county. Staff provides classroom presentations and helps promote classroom presentations offered by water purveyors through newsletters and the Teacher's Guide mentioned above.

Water Education Website (www.sbwater.org): The website contains activities, interactive student data exchanges, the Water Activities Manual sections, links to other sites, a calendar of events, an on-line catalog and many other features. The site is promoted to teachers and others through regular distribution of a postcard advertising the site.

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS

Water Awareness Month: Events include tours of water and wastewater treatment plants, and the desalination facility located in the City of Santa Barbara, classroom presentations and Goleta Water Awareness Day. In addition, displays were set up in the lobby of the main library in Santa Barbara and in the lobby of the County Administration Building in Santa Barbara.

Earth Day Fair: Staff coordinates local purveyor participation in this annual event. Displays are created for adults, and a children's activity booth is also put together - includes "fishing for water facts," the watershed model, and building a water cycle bracelet.

Girl Scouts Water Drop Patch Event: Provides local troops of Girl Scouts with the opportunity to earn their Water Drop Patch. The patch requirements were jointly developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital. Patch activities include writing poems and preparing art for the River of Words Art and Poetry Contest, completing a water conservation and pollution prevention checklist, identifying animals found in our local watersheds, touring the wastewater treatment plant, and preparing murals depicting uses of water.

Water of Santa Barbara County: Brochure providing an overview of the water cycle, rainfall data, desalination and water treatment operations, and other pertinent information. Distributed to local water purveyors, teachers, students and other interested individuals and organizations and at all public events attended by Water Agency staff.

Water Resources Brochure: Summarizes the water supplies and uses throughout the county. The brochures are available to the public at water district offices, public events such as Earth Day, and at presentations made to groups.

County Water Connection Newsletter: This quarterly newsletter covers water efficiency and water supply topics in Santa Barbara County.

LANDSCAPE WATER EFFICIENCY: EDUCATION AND MATERIALS

Santa Barbara County ET Controller Distribution and Installation Program: The ET Controller Program is a grant-funded program that will involve distribution and installation of 312 ET controllers over three years. Each purveyor will target their residential customers with the largest landscapes and the highest irrigation water demand. The program will include marketing ET controllers to targeted residential customers, installing ET controllers at demonstration sites, training local landscape contractors to install the controllers, and providing participating customers with ET controllers installed with rain sensors.

Green Gardener Certification Program: The Green Gardener Certification Program was developed in conjunction with the City of Santa Barbara, with funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Additional sponsors include the Santa Barbara Community College District Continuing Education Division, County of Santa Barbara Solid Waste and Utilities Division, Community Environmental Council, Horticulture Consortium of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Carpinteria Valley Water District, La Cumbre Mutual Water Company, Goleta Water District, and Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District. The goal of the program is to educate professional landscape maintenance gardeners in resource-efficient landscaping practices. Participants take a seven-week class through the Adult Education Program to become certified Green Gardeners. Upon certification, gardeners receive many benefits including free advertising and promotion and discounts from vendors and sponsors. The program is taught in both English and Spanish. Water Agency staff will keep a list of certified Green Gardeners to distribute to homeowners looking for "green" landscape services.

Sustainable Demonstration Garden in Santa Maria: The garden is located at the County Technical Services Center in Santa Maria, which includes the offices of state, federal and county agencies that serve the public. This location guarantees significant exposure to the urban and

development community that must come to the facility to obtain county building permits or other services provided at the center.

11th Annual Santa Barbara County Home and Garden Show: Staff distributed educational materials for sustainable landscaping and promoted the Green Gardener Program.

Sustainable Landscape Brochure: This attractive and informative brochure, published in 1992 as a cooperative effort among water districts in the Tri-Counties area, features local resource-efficient landscapes and sustainable landscape concepts. The brochure contains attractive photographs, information on sustainable landscapes and resources/references for assistance. Brochures were distributed at the annual landscape fair, at Earth Day, and by individual purveyors.

How to Water Your Garden Brochure: Staff purchased these brochures from *Sunset Magazine* to distribute at public events and irrigation workshops throughout the year. This colorful brochure includes guidelines, checklists, diagrams, and helpful hints to allow the homeowner to use water efficiently.

Landscape Irrigation Guide for Landscape Professionals: This brochure provides information for landscape professionals on watering times, plant water requirements, and how to utilize CIMIS (California Irrigation Management Information System) information for the landscapes they maintain. Purveyors are encouraged to distribute the brochure during water audits.

Large Landscape Water Audits: Staff worked with the Cachuma Resource Conservation District's Irrigation Water Management Program to facilitate audits for public agencies (school districts, parks, universities) and private turf areas (golf courses, etc.) in Santa Barbara County. Financial contributions from the county make it possible to reduce the cost of an audit to certain types of "customers" such as universities, sod farms, and others. County staff assisted the conservation districts in promoting these audits by distributing a brochure describing the audit services. These brochures are available to local purveyors to distribute to their customers.

AGRICULTURAL WATER EFFICIENCY

California Irrigation Management Information Service (CIMIS): A series of weather stations throughout the state provide real time evapotranspiration (ET) data for irrigators to use in scheduling irrigation of agricultural acreage or landscapes such as large turf areas. There are six of these CIMIS stations located in Santa Barbara County. Staff distributes information brochures regarding the CIMIS hotline and how to use ET data to schedule irrigation.

INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS

Green Awards Consortium: The Water Agency is a member of the Green Awards Consortium which has developed an awards program that honors businesses in Santa Barbara County that demonstrate environmental stewardship above and beyond their primary mission. The activities considered in the nomination process include those that result in cleaner air or water, less waste, less traffic, conservation of water and energy, and reduced use of hazardous materials.

Lodging Industry In-Room Brochures for Water and Energy Efficiency: In-room brochures for the local lodging industry to promote guest awareness of water and energy efficiency practices were printed by the Water Agency using grant funding for use by water purveyors.

Program Objective/Driving Force:

The driving force behind the implementation of the program was the severe drought of 1986-1992 that affected the central coast of California. In 1990, when the drought was at its peak, the local planning commission recommended the implementation of a regional program to assist the numerous, small water districts within the county with the development of conservation programs to help them through the drought. After the drought ended, various mandates by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and voluntary programs launched by the state made it a necessity to continue the program.

Program Type:

Agency specific - but adapted from a program that was begun in Ventura County in response to the drought. Combination of classroom and community based.

What Works Best:

We have found that a unified message sent by all purveyors in the county has a greater reach (more funding to spread around since the Water Agency and each of the water purveyors contribute to joint programs), and results in less confusion by customers. Also, it prevents each agency from "re-inventing the wheel" for programs that all agencies have in common. Smaller agencies that do not have the staff time to dedicate to conservation can still meet Reclamation and Urban Council requirements by participating in the regional program. Cost-share contributions for joint programs are based on the annual production of each purveyor.

What Would Change:

Even in a small geographic area, public perception of a program can vary widely. It is important to develop programs that have mass appeal. It is also necessary to constantly evaluate each of the components of the program to make sure they meet the needs of the program and drop any that are no longer popular with the public.

Evaluation of Effectiveness:

As part of our budgetary and strategic planning process each year, and in an effort to improve the Regional Water Efficiency Program and enhance our accountability to the water purveyors and water users in the county, we conduct a satisfaction survey regarding the services provided in this program. Each purveyor is asked to complete the survey; and comments and suggestions are incorporated into the program's work plan for the following year. We believe the program is successful as we have maintained a consistent overall score above 4.5 (5.0 is the highest ranking).

In addition, the Water Agency meets the criteria set in the best management practices required of wholesale agencies in the California Urban Water Conservation Council's memorandum of understanding and the criteria for Reclamation's conservation plan.