

CASE STUDY: SARASOTA, FLORIDA

Program Name: A Motorized Water Conservation Message

Agency Name: Sarasota County Environmental Services Utilities

Contact Person: Linda Seashore Larsen, Water Conservation Coordinator

Contact Information:

Sarasota County Environmental Services

2817 Cattlemen Road

Sarasota, FL 34232

941-378-6144

Llarsen@co.sarasota.fl.us

www.SCESonline.org

Number of Customers: 60,000 hookups

Program Description:

In December 1998, a creative and innovative water conservation effort was inaugurated. A county transit bus, covered in vinyl depicting a water conserving landscape with enlargements of native, drought-tolerant plants, took to local streets. The large printed message says:

Be Water Wise

Plant Smart and Mulch

Know Your Lawn Watering Days

Install Water-Saving Fixtures

Fix Leaks

Program Beginning: 1998

Target Audience:

The bus travels the entire county regularly and is used on different routes for maximum exposure. The population of Sarasota is about 300,000, but there is a significant increase in population of tourist and winter visitors that greatly increases the population reached with this message.

The bus is unique and sparks interest among riders as well as people seeing it from the streets and sidewalks. Exterior bus wrap advertising exposes every demographic group each day and every hour that the bus is in service. It is cheaper to invest in a mobile billboard for three years than to pay for billboard rental for the same period. Plus, there is much more visibility because of the mobility of the bus.

Program Cost and Funding:

The Water Conservation Program partnered with the Recycling and Keep Sarasota Beautiful programs on this project. The cost per bus was just under \$6,000. Staff created the graphics design and messages in-house, and a Florida company produced the vinyl wrap and installed it on the buses. This is the third year of the wrap and it still looks good. The funds were used from an existing water conservation promotion budget line item.

Program Objective/Driving Force:

The county's rapid transit service was looking for a new revenue source. The exterior bus wraps not only promoted the environmental programs but also served as an advertisement for local businesses to see what this form of advertising looked like. It was a win-win situation for both entities.

Program Type: Agency specific and community based.

What Works Best: A simple, clear message that is easy to read.

What Would Change:

Our experience showed that dark colors do not show well on the buses. Light colored backgrounds were the most effective.

Evaluation for Effectiveness:

Average residential water use in Florida is between 100 to 150 gallons per person per day. Outdoor water use generally accounts for 50 percent or more of that total. Many residents are unaware of the costs and benefits of a water-efficient landscape. The bus design is before the public every day it is in service, constantly reinforcing the water conservation message.