



# Partners Made It Possible 2021 Excellence Awards

WaterSense and its more than 2,000 utility, manufacturer, retail, builder, and other organizational partners promote water-efficient products, homes, and programs to consumers and businesses across the country. Over the past 15 years, WaterSense partners have helped Americans save more than 5.3 trillion gallons of water. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is pleased to recognize 13 Excellence Award winners in particular for making water savings possible in 2020, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## EXCELLENCE IN STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

### Alliance for Water Efficiency



Thanks to its continued commitment to collaborate on water conservation efforts in 2020, the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) has won its fifth Excellence Award for Strategic Collaboration. AWE has a WaterSense and Water-Efficient Products Advisory Committee whose mission is to improve water efficiency through the adoption of WaterSense labeled products and water-saving professional services; during committee meetings, WaterSense has a standing time slot to update the group on all its activities. AWE also partners with WaterSense to produce a periodic outdoor water use webinar series. Three webinars held in 2020 focused on topics such as landscape transformations and the WaterSense Your Better Yard campaign. In collaboration with two educators, AWE created Learning Landscapes: Outdoor Water Efficiency and Conservation Lessons, to teach the importance of using water efficiently outdoors. Finally, AWE, with funding from WaterSense partner Kohler Co., published a report in 2020 about the affordability of water and sewer service in Detroit. The report included an evaluation of the potential savings from replacing older toilets with new, WaterSense labeled models.

### Metropolitan Council (Minnesota)



The Metropolitan Council in Minnesota won its first WaterSense Award for Excellence in Strategic Collaboration, thanks to its work promoting water savings and WaterSense with other water conservation-oriented organizations. The Metropolitan Council Environmental Services' Water Efficiency Grant Program collaborates with its 38 participating communities, including five WaterSense partners, to fund replacement of toilets, irrigation controllers, and spray sprinkler bodies with WaterSense labeled models, as well as irrigation audits by professionals certified by a WaterSense labeled program. In 2020, grant funding was used to replace 600 toilets and nearly 900 weather-based irrigation controllers! The Metropolitan Council also partnered with the University of Minnesota Turfgrass Science Program in 2020 on a five-part webinar series, "Watering Wisdom: Growing a Healthy Lawn with Less Water," attended by over 140 participants. To help local businesses save water, Metropolitan Council worked with the University of Minnesota Technical Assistance Program to provide funds for their water conservation activities.

## EXCELLENCE IN COLLABORATION AND PROMOTING WATERSENSE LABELED PRODUCTS

### San Diego County Water Authority



The San Diego County Water Authority has won its third WaterSense award as a professional certifying organization, for Excellence in Collaboration and Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products. Because of the pandemic, the

Water Authority pivoted its courses to a virtual Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) curriculum, which it promoted through its partnerships with the San Diego County Watershed Program and California Landscape Contractors Association. In 2020, the Authority issued 25 QWEL certifications and 164 re-certifications and collaborated with three California community colleges to provide QWEL trainings, including recordings, exam files, and free reference manuals mailed to students. The Water Authority also partnered with San Diego Gas and Electric to install nearly 4,000 WaterSense labeled showerheads for residents in the area and helped residents save water outdoors through its WaterSmart Contractor Incentive Program, which installed more than 1,000 WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers to achieve 6 million gallons in water savings!

## EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING WATERSENSE LABELED PRODUCTS

### Alameda County Water District



Despite the added challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, helping customers improve the efficiency of their fixtures throughout 2020 earned Alameda County (California) Water District (ACWD) an Excellence Award for Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products. ACWD distributed more than 300

WaterSense labeled showerheads and aerators to customers and provided nearly 200 rebates on WaterSense labeled weather-based irrigation controllers. Additionally, more than 20 WaterSense labeled toilets and urinals were installed as part of ACWD's High-Efficiency Toilet and Urinal Rebate Programs. ACWD streamlined many of its rebates and assistance programs by adopting remote and virtual processes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. ACWD's Water Savings Assistance Partnership Program with Pacific Gas & Electric Company targeted income-qualified customers to receive free WaterSense labeled products, installations, water use surveys, leak checks, and water efficiency education in addition to other energy efficiency measures. Outreach efforts to promote the program included placing an ad in the local *Tri-City Voice* newspaper, distributing information to senior homes and family resource centers, and mailing an informational letter to District customers who were likely to be eligible for the program. In 2020, nearly 100 homes participated in this program and over 70 WaterSense labeled toilets were installed.

“Alameda County Water District is proud to be a WaterSense Promotional Partner. We appreciate the simplicity of pointing our customers toward devices and fixtures that are fully vetted through the WaterSense labeling program and we rest easy knowing that our customers are receiving high-performing equipment that supports our water savings goals.”

—Stephanie Nevins, Water Use Efficiency Supervisor

### Niagara®



Earning its fifth WaterSense award for Excellence in Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products, Niagara® continued to prove its dedication to water savings in 2020. Niagara offers credited continuing education for architects

and engineers that highlights the importance of water conservation and installing WaterSense labeled products in new construction. Although Niagara couldn't promote their labeled products in person during most of 2020, they included information about WaterSense in every virtual event where representatives presented, as well as on their website, social media, and product packaging. In addition, Green Builder's Home of the Year and the Sustainability Awards program recognized Niagara's WaterSense labeled Nano® toilet as an Innovation of the Year, and the company began designing a number of new products specifically for professional plumbers in four different categories to meet WaterSense specifications.

## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

### City of Allen



Three-time WaterSense Excellence Award winner the City of Allen (Texas) got an A+ for teaching its residents how to conserve water in 2020. During Fix a Leak Week, the City conducted a number of promotions, including a presentation to more than 1,600 fifth graders. A local library display promoted Sprinkler Spruce-Up, Your Better Bathroom, and Shower Better using WaterSense materials to educate library-goers on different ways to save water throughout the year. The library also hosts the City of Allen's demonstration garden, which was selected for the 2020 Small Utility Conservation award by the Texas Section of the American Water Works Association. City Water Conservation Staff continued hosting the Sustainable Landscape Series in 2020, holding seven seminars between January and March, and nearly 600 adults attended. After one in-person seminar was cancelled due to COVID-19, the City of Allen didn't cancel class completely. They videotaped and posted three sustainable landscape presentations on sprinkler systems, which were also offered on the local cable TV channel.

## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

### Department of Water, County of Kaua'i



The Department of Water for the County of Kaua'i (Hawaii) made their WaterSense Awards debut in 2020 for Excellence in Education and Outreach. The department organized COVID-safe community education events to reach its 72,500 residents with water efficiency messages in 2020. Kaua'i Department of Water hosted Fix a Leak Week events islandwide, at a local farmer's market, and with three displays at local ACE hardware stores. The department distributed leak detective activities for visitors to their offices, as well as 64 leak detection kits and 100 toilet leak detection tablets before pandemic restrictions affected the island. Personnel shared videos on social media with tips for leak detection, faucet aerator installation, and conservation messages. Throughout the year, the Kaua'i Department of Water distributed welcome packages to both new and existing customers to encourage replacing old fixtures with WaterSense labeled models, providing free showerheads, faucet aerators, leak detection toilet tablets, and brochures. Kaua'i Department of Water also coordinated and distributed more than 500 water education resource kits during a COVID-safe drive-through event as part of the national Imagine a Day Without Water campaign.



Drive-through event.

## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND PROMOTING WATERSENSE

### Harris-Galveston Subsidence District



The Harris-Galveston (Texas) Subsidence District won its first WaterSense Excellence Award for Education and Promoting WaterSense. In 2020, the Subsidence District reached more than 40,000 third through sixth grade students in the Houston area through the Water Detectives school program; its customized WaterWise curriculum focused on water conservation and transitioned to an online format when the pandemic began. The program's free laboratory kits include WaterSense labeled products for participating students and teachers. To make the school program and other water conservation education materials accessible during the pandemic, the Subsidence District redesigned SmarterAboutWater.org, which includes a virtual educational content and videos on WaterSense labeled products and installation tutorials for parents. The Subsidence District gave a presentation about this resource, water conservation, and WaterSense to more than 150 educators at the virtual Texas Association for Environmental Education conference. From participating in the WaterSense Twitter party for Fix a Leak Week and creating an original video about toilet leaks, to promoting the

water-saving fixtures installed in a WaterSense labeled home at the University of Texas at Dallas, the Subsidence District also utilized social media to spread the word about WaterSense.

## EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING WATERSENSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### Hilton Head Public Service District



The Hilton Head (South Carolina) Public Service District (PSD) found creative ways to spread the word about water conservation in 2020 without events, winning their second Excellence Award for Promoting WaterSense on Social Media. Hilton Head PSD used the

partner marketing calendar to guide their outreach on a number of WaterSense campaigns on social media, including Fix a Leak Week, Your Better Bathroom, and the I'm for Water pledge, as well as promoting WaterSense labeled products to do-it-yourselfers. Starting in January, they encouraged customers to use the Alliance for Water Efficiency's Home Water Works Calculator to estimate how much water their household uses. The PSD's April e-newsletter focused on smart sprinkler products. It incorporated a back-to-school theme in the fall to encourage customers on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to hire an irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program before cold weather landscaping. And to foster an online community of water-conscious residents, Hilton Head PSD created a Facebook group for gardeners and water-efficient landscape design, where it shared information about the Clemson Extension programs for local plants.

"We believe it is so important to put the power of WaterSense programs behind our digital outreach to our customers. WaterSense provides clear and useful messaging, and attractive media collateral, that we really hope all water utilities embrace and share with their customers. It just makes great sense."

—Pete Nardi, Hilton Head PSD  
General Manager

## EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING THE MULTIFAMILY EPA WATER SCORE

### Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency



Santa Clarita Valley (SCV) Water Agency in California earned its second WaterSense Award for Excellence in Promoting the Multifamily EPA Water Score. SCV Water's Multifamily Apartment Project began in 2018 and used the EPA Water Score to benchmark water use in apartment buildings in its service area. In its initial years, the project collected water use data for about 90 percent of multifamily complexes in SCV Water's service area and interviewed property owners to gauge their needs, concerns, and interest in water efficiency. In 2020, SCV Water's consultant conducted water use check-ups in nearly 1,000 units

spanning several apartment complexes and left cards behind describing WaterSense and water-saving tips for tenants. Each inspection included free leak detection, irrigation system checks, and a comprehensive indoor water use review at no cost to the customer. SCV Water's program resulted in more than 2,200 ultra-high-efficiency toilets, nearly 700 kitchen faucet aerators, nearly 1,500 WaterSense labeled bathroom faucet aerators, and more than 1,400 WaterSense labeled showerheads being installed in these apartments. Their efforts helped save more than 14 million gallons of water in 2020 and more than 109 million gallons over the life of the program.

## EXCELLENCE IN CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GROWTH

### California Water Efficiency Partnership



The California Water Efficiency Partnership (CalWEP) has won its first WaterSense Award, for Excellence in Certification Program Growth. In 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Partnership continued its existing training program by offering two in-person Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) trainings in collaboration with 10 Bay Area water

agencies, resulting in 44 professionals earning their QWEL certification. When pandemic restrictions were put in place, CalWEP worked with the Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership to fully transition trainings from in-person to online. In fall 2020, CalWEP offered two pilot virtual QWEL trainings, followed by two additional online trainings later in the year. The virtual trainings helped CalWEP reach a wider audience and certify an additional 122 professionals! The online trainings achieved a 97 percent pass rate, compared to an average of 84 percent for their in-person trainings. CalWEP was able to build upon the initial work of a marketing firm to target nearly 500 new professionals through digital and phone outreach and created newly branded promotional materials for the 10 water suppliers serving the greater Bay Area to share with their communities.



## EXCELLENCE IN WATERSENSE PROMOTION AND OUTREACH

### G3, Green Gardens Group



G3LA, the Green Gardens Group of Los Angeles, has won its second Excellence Award, for WaterSense Promotion and Outreach. In 2020, G3LA offered 90 classes and workshops for property owners and water conservation staff, reaching over 3,100 people; the courses encouraged attendees to look for the WaterSense label when selecting irrigation equipment and certified

professionals when hiring irrigation contractors. In March 2020, G3LA pivoted from in-person classes to online webinars and created two introductory videos to supplement them. To spread the word about water-smart landscaping, G3LA partnered with another WaterSense partner, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, on workshops about California-friendly landscaping. The workshops included information about native plants, turf removal, and the benefits of working with an irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program. G3LA also promoted WaterSense campaigns such as Fix a Leak Week and Mulch Madness and linked to WaterSense resources from their website.

## EXCELLENCE IN ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

### The Toro Company



The Toro Company has won its seventh WaterSense Award, this time for Excellence in Engagement and Outreach. In 2020, Toro launched its Sustainability Endures platform to continue its commitment to making a positive financial, social, and environmental impact

worldwide. The company found new ways to give back to the community, such as co-authoring a children’s book on water conservation, designing and installing a water-efficient demonstration garden in a local park, and donating irrigation products for living gardens at three California elementary schools. Toro launched a newsletter series, Take Five, and sent several e-blasts to equip irrigation contractors with the latest information on WaterSense labeled products. Since launching the series in 2020, the newsletter—which frequently mentions the benefits of WaterSense labeled products—has reached over 3,500 contractor contacts. To further educate distributors and contractors, Toro hosted or sponsored 30 training events.

“Sustainability and outreach are a steadfast part of our purpose and culture so it is an honor to be recognized by the EPA for a seventh consecutive year. We look forward to continued partnership with the EPA WaterSense program to provide product and outreach solutions that advance the responsible use of water.”

—John McPhee, General Manager, Toro Irrigation and Lighting Business

## Learn More

WaterSense congratulates the 2021 Excellence Award winners. For more information and to learn about all the benefits of partnership, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense).