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Partners Made It Possible

2021 Partner of the Year 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 12 Partners of the Year in particular for making water savings possible in 2020, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROMOTIONAL PARTNERS OF THE YEAR

City of Durham Water Management



After winning several Excellence Awards in previous years, the City of Durham (North Carolina) Water Management department earned its first Partner of the Year Award thanks to its creativity during COVID-19. During Fix a Leak Week 2020, for example, the City built on the popularity of the

Stranger Things television series and made “Leaky Things” parody videos featuring the Wayne Drop character. Prior to that and before restrictions were imposed, Durham Water Management held its popular social media contest, “Where’s Wayne Wednesday,” during which followers were asked to guess the location of mascot Wayne Drop for a chance at free WaterSense labeled showerheads and faucet aerators.

Prior to the pandemic, Durham Water Management was able to participate in six public outreach events, reaching more than 250 people. Once restrictions started, the City quickly pivoted, offering four virtual educational events, including two teacher workshops and school science club presentations. They shared the lessons they learned from these efforts during a WaterSense roundtable on how partners pivoted for the pandemic. In August 2020, Durham participated in the Wyland National Mayor’s Challenge for Water Conservation and engaged more than 1,800 consumers through Twitter and Facebook posts.

Durham Water Management’s toilet rebate program incentivized customers to purchase nearly 900 toilets in 2020! In January, Durham encouraged the local ABC-TV affiliate to run a story about its WaterSense toilet rebate program highlighting the savings that WaterSense toilets can achieve. The department continued to work with Waste Reduction Partners to offer water auditing services to larger non-residential customers throughout the year. Durham focused its efforts on hotels, and Waste Reduction Partners was able to qualify two hotels for WaterSense labeled toilet rebates through this program. The City also completed 75 residential and commercial water use assessments before the pandemic, and in the process, provided 85 WaterSense labeled showerheads and 94 aerators to customers. In lieu of in-person water use assessments, nearly 60 phone consultations were completed during the remainder of 2020.



“Leaky Things” parody video.

Regional Water Authority



The Regional Water Authority (California) won its first Partner of the Year Award, thanks to its commitment to water-saving outreach and education. The Authority's Water Efficiency Program serves 19 water providers across the Sacramento region, and in 2020 the program helped those entities promote WaterSense's monthly themes for Fix a Leak Week, water-smart landscaping, Sprinkler Spruce-Up, and saving water at home. To make it easier for local agencies to incorporate WaterSense into their outreach efforts, the Authority created an online shareable library of customized WaterSense tools, including campaign materials and social media posts.

The Authority found several creative ways to engage residents during the pandemic. Through the Water Spots Video contest, local middle and high school students created public service announcements (PSAs) with a water efficiency theme. The contest received 90 video submissions, and the winning PSA was played during the "coming attractions" on six different movie theater screens viewed by over 140,000 people! To reach a younger audience, the Regional Water Authority funds several exhibits, which include examples of WaterSense labeled products and promote water efficiency, in Sacramento's new Museum of Science and Curiosity.

The Regional Water Authority partnered with WaterSense manufacturer partner Rachio in 2020 to offer a rebate for Rachio's WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers. The Authority also worked with a research firm to conduct two focus groups with residential water customers to explore attitudes, benefits, and barriers to finding and fixing household leaks, which helped the Authority refine its materials for 2020.

Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power



Service, Quality, Community

The City of Big Bear Lake (California) Department of Water and Power had another big year in saving water, earning its second WaterSense Partner of the Year Award. The department participated in many WaterSense campaigns, from Fix a Leak Week to Sprinkler Spruce-Up and Your Better Bathroom to WaterSense "bath hacks." Promotion for these campaigns included press releases and radio and print ads reaching more than 11,000 customers. In addition to WaterSense campaigns, Big Bear Lake promoted Smart Irrigation Month, California Native Plant Week, World Toilet Day, Water Professionals Awareness Week, Groundwater Awareness Week, and World Water Day.

In 2020, Big Bear Lake expanded its rebate program that includes incentives for WaterSense labeled toilets, irrigation controllers, and spray sprinkler bodies. They implemented an expanded WaterSense outdoor product rebate program, collecting proof of installation through photos via email rather than through in-person surveys, due to pandemic restrictions. Customers could receive \$100 per WaterSense labeled smart irrigation controller installed and up to \$2 per spray sprinkler body replaced with a WaterSense labeled model. The department also has two rebate options for toilets, offering individual incentives up to \$100. Additionally, Big Bear Lake gave away hundreds of WaterSense labeled aerators and showerheads to residents throughout the year.

To promote the value of water among children, Big Bear Lake conducted an Imagine a Day Without Water art contest for local students to win prizes with their illustrations. To further engage and educate children, Big Bear Lake distributed WaterSmart conservation kits to local fifth grade students with WaterSense labeled showerheads and faucet aerators. Much of Big Bear Lake's promotion was done via its social media channels, with more than 30 social posts featuring WaterSense reaching more than 2,000 people, along with eight radio ads that ran more than 200 times.

Irvine Ranch Water District



Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) pushed through the challenges of 2020 to win its second WaterSense Partner of the Year Award. To kick off Fix a Leak Week, the California-based District hosted a Don't Spring a Leak virtual workshop for 60 attendees. More than 300 customers participated in the District's Fix a Leak Sweepstakes by submitting photos of themselves repairing leaks, or by completing online training and a quiz. IRWD promoted and

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provided rebate funding for WaterSense labeled products, which resulted in issuing rebates for 32 toilets and over 800 weather-based irrigation controllers in 2020.

To promote outdoor water savings, IRWD hosted a Sprinkler Spruce-Up webinar to educate customers about irrigation maintenance and a Control Your Controller virtual workshop to teach customers the basics of sprinkler timers and control techniques. Additionally, IRWD held nine RightScape workshops on climate-appropriate landscaping for more than 700 participants. The District's humorous "Evolve Your Yard" campaign, featuring the antics of a clumsy Tyrannosaurus Rex, was promoted through social media, theaters, and local newspapers for more than four million impressions. Throughout the year, IRWD's Juan Garcia, a certified irrigation professional, continued his "Ask Juan" newsletter column.

The District's Home Water Check-Up and Commercial, Industrial and Institutional Site Evaluation programs completed more than 175 in-person leak-check visits and tele-visits in 2020. During the pandemic, IRWD staff modified WaterSense's Landscape Checklist to help customers conduct their own irrigation audits while at home and offered help via phone calls and video conferencing. In partnership with Southern California Edison, SoCalGas, and Rachio, IRWD also offered a residential direct installation program for WaterSense labeled weather-based irrigation controllers. IRWD's WaterStar Business Recognition Program acknowledged two local companies in 2020 and distributed showerheads and faucet aerators at no cost to qualifying organizations, along with a \$300 rebate on WaterSense labeled toilets.



IRWD Fix a Leak Week workshop.

Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District



The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District took their water conservation partnerships to new heights in 2020—and took home their second WaterSense Partner of the Year Award in a row. Before COVID-19 restrictions were in place, Northern Water offered three classes for the community in partnership with the Irrigation Association: Drip Design, Installation, and Maintenance; Alternative

Water Source and Supply; and a class to become a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor. Eighty people participated in these classes. Northern Colorado Water also partnered with the Sonoran Institute and others to host Growing Water Smart workshops, which were conducted virtually for 60 attendees. These workshops covered how water efficiency can be factored into planning for new development needed to respond to intense growth in the region and thus reduce pressure on local water supplies.

To help encourage outdoor water savings, Northern Water awarded 13 grants in 2020 to homeowners associations, municipalities, businesses, and districts for water-efficient landscaping projects amounting to \$145,000. WaterSense labeled irrigation products were required in order to qualify for project funding. As a result of these projects, an estimated 500,000 gallons of water will be saved annually. To further promote outdoor water savings, Northern Water promoted Sprinkler Spruce-Up by sharing information on the WaterSense Find a Pro tool and promoted the EPA Water Budget Tool on social media.

Northern Water contracted with Resource Central, a non-profit efficiency organization, to provide irrigation auditing on commercial landscapes and in local homeowners associations' common areas. Auditors performed 34 onsite consultations in 2020, during which they promoted WaterSense labeled products. WaterSense was also featured on Northern Colorado's blog and Instagram account by describing ways to reduce indoor water use with labeled products. Northern Water even created a video promoting its partnership with WaterSense, along with its WaterSense award and fellow award winners.

"Northern Water is elated to be included in the esteemed company of WaterSense award winners. WaterSense is foundational to the success of conservation and efficiency, and we are proud to incorporate it into our programs. Water users, stakeholders, and the environment all benefit from the collaborative approach, and we value its continued evolution and partnership."

—Frank Kinder, Water Efficiency Program Manager

City of Sacramento Department of Utilities



The City of Sacramento (California) Department of Utilities was on a roll in 2020, winning first place in the Wyland National Mayor’s Water Conservation Challenge for their size and earning their second WaterSense Partner of the Year Award in a row. The City participated in many WaterSense campaigns, including Fix a Leak Week, Shower Better, Your Better Bathroom, and Sprinkler Spruce-Up. The City’s

Leak-Free Sacramento program continued to assist customers in disadvantaged communities and low-income areas throughout the year, helping 27 homeowners with repairs while observing pandemic restrictions, which meant conducting leak detection over the phone and focusing on outdoor issues. The program also repaired six water mains and replaced an additional eight. The Leak-Free Sacramento program alone saved the City nearly 25 million gallons of water per year. Projects involved leak repairs ranging from 4.1 gallons per hour (gph) to 865 gph, and the average leak repair project was 104 gph.

To further help those in disadvantaged communities save water, the Department of Utilities Water Conservation Office provided 184 free WaterSense labeled MaP Premium high-efficiency toilets and paid for the labor to install them in multifamily properties as part of its new RE-DO the LOO program. The City sent more than 7,000 letters to the top single-family water users, encouraging them to participate in a virtual Water Wise House Call, and helped 484 customers. The City also sent over 21,000 automatic leak notification letters and conducted more than 2,900 free leak investigations. Promoting incentives throughout the year, the City worked with its local electric utility to offer instant rebates online for WaterSense labeled smart irrigation controllers, showerheads, and aerators. In 2020, 873 smart irrigation controllers, 579 showerheads, 338 aerators, and 31 combo kits were mailed to city customers between March and December. The City’s turf conversion rebate had record-breaking participation in 2020, helping customers transform 178,000 square feet of drought-tolerant landscape.

Because of the pandemic restrictions, the City pivoted and started offering webinars instead of in-person workshops. The City held six webinars in lieu of in-person workshops and classes: “Break up with Your Lawn: the Basics to Create a Thriving Landscape” in May; “Smart Irrigation for Trees” in June; “Get Water Smart: Irrigation Upgrade” in July; the “Ins and Outs of Home Water Use” in September; and a tree pruning webinar in November. In addition, they promoted Imagine a Day Without Water with one full day of webinars and drop-shipped 300 rain barrels to customers. The City had over 1,300 people attend its webinars live and over 4,000 later watched the recordings.

Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District



The Upper San Gabriel Valley (California) Municipal Water District has once again earned a WaterSense Partner of the Year Award for its continued water conservation work, even as it pivoted its outreach in response to pandemic restrictions. The Upper District participated in and promoted WaterSense campaigns including Fix a Leak Week, Shower Better, Sprinkler Spruce-Up, Save Water at Home, We’re for Water, and Find an Irrigation Pro. It also produced a promotional video for residents and businesses, “What is WaterSense,” in English, Spanish, and Mandarin.

The Upper District pivoted its Conserve-a-palooza event into a five-week virtual campaign to celebrate its 60th anniversary during the pandemic. The campaign featured weekly water efficiency quizzes and raffles for various prizes, including WaterSense labeled weather-based irrigation controllers. Winners were announced weekly and water-saving tips were shared during a “Water Smart Minute” video on Upper District’s website and social media. The Upper District also conducted six live landscape webinars for 150 participants; speakers discussed WaterSense labeled products and how to find an irrigation professional. To reach younger residents, the



“What is WaterSense” video.

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Upper District sent emails to principals of over 250 schools encouraging students to be leak detectives for Fix a Leak Week.

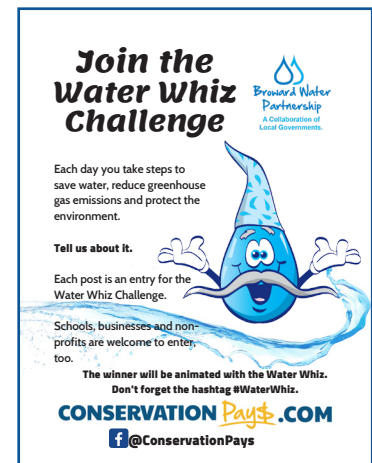
To further promote and incentivize water savings, the Upper District offered rebates for WaterSense labeled toilets, urinals, and weather-based irrigation controllers. To help the WaterSense program and its partners reach a broader audience with water-saving messages, the Upper District also provided EPA with Chinese translations of several WaterSense campaign materials.

Broward Water Partnership



The Broward Water Partnership (BWP) of Florida won its fourth Partner of the Year Award, due in part to its creative use of digital advertising technologies and promotional partnerships. In 2020, the Partnership promoted several WaterSense campaigns, including Fix a Leak Week, Your Better Bathroom, and Shower Better. The partnership's outreach efforts during Fix a Leak Week reached over 16,000 people in the Broward County area. BWP provided graphics and brochures to its municipal partners so they could promote WaterSense campaigns and water efficiency as well. The Partnership also created its own unique campaigns, such as the Conservation Ambassadors—characters that promote water conservation and WaterSense labeled products on social media and in advertising.

To boost rebate numbers during the pandemic, BWP placed print and digital advertisements for the water-efficient product rebates it offers, along with television ads focused on WaterSense labeled toilets. The Partnership used “geofencing” technology to advertise directly to smartphone users located around local big-box stores Lowe’s Home Improvement and The Home Depot. BWP also used GIS technology to target condominium addresses and owners from buildings constructed before 1994 that are eligible to receive rebates on WaterSense labeled fixtures, and sent over 7,000 postcards to residents in these target areas notifying residents of available rebates. In 2020, the Partnership conducted a study to see how the COVID-19 pandemic affected water use in Broward County that revealed new opportunities to increase outreach about WaterSense labeled faucet aerators and showerheads, which many BWP partners offer free of charge.



Water Whiz Challenge poster.

Even with the challenges presented by COVID-19, BWP was able to give several virtual presentations focused on water conservation; during each presentation, attendees were encouraged to install WaterSense labeled products. The Partnership also encouraged residents to save water at home through its Water Whiz Challenge, promoted via digital and print advertisements, social media, and email blasts. More than 200 residents submitted actions they took to protect water resources!

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFYING ORGANIZATION PARTNER OF THE YEAR

The City of Aspen



The City of Aspen (Colorado) won its second Partner of the Year Award in 2020, continuing many of its award-winning activities from 2019 even as it faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic began, the City pivoted in-person trainings to a virtual format, where it offered classes through Zoom and allowed participants to take tests online. To reach a larger audience of potential certified irrigation professionals in 2020, the City of Aspen developed and offered a customized Spanish version of the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) training. The City also offered a “train-the-trainer” program to prepare two certified QWEL graduates to lead 2020 trainings.



Irrigation audit.

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To help graduates promote their QWEL certification and their knowledge of WaterSense labeled products and water-efficient irrigation techniques, the City of Aspen provided each graduate of its certified professional courses with QWEL stickers that included the WaterSense label to put on their trucks or business windows. The City also sent a quarterly newsletter to about 50 certified professionals that included information about upcoming WaterSense webinars and any new program resources available to promote or improve their water-efficient irrigation services. For the broader audience of Aspen's 7,500 residents and property owners (not to mention its ever-expanding base of seasonal visitors), the City's webpage on Water Wise Landscaping has a section dedicated to WaterSense and includes links to guides and webinars and case studies.

Throughout 2020, the City of Aspen continued to revise its Water Efficient Landscaping Standards, which require all new and retrofitted landscapes to have WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers and third-party irrigation audits by a professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program. The City also continued to provide trainings to other water utilities in Colorado and provided resources and curriculum to those interested in offering their own QWEL trainings.

MANUFACTURER PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Orbit Irrigation Products, Inc.



Orbit Irrigation Products has earned a WaterSense Partner of the Year Award as a result of its commitment to manufacturing and promoting WaterSense labeled spray sprinkler bodies and

controllers. WaterSense labeled spray sprinkler bodies joined the Orbit family of labeled products with 54 models in 2020, and now 95 percent of the B-hyve controller models are WaterSense labeled.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Orbit associates visited The Home Depot and Lowe's Home Improvement stores in key irrigation markets to demonstrate how its WaterSense labeled B-hyve smart irrigation controllers work, highlighting their water-efficient programming and performance. Once COVID-19 restrictions were in place, Orbit pivoted its promotion and shipped B-hyve displays to over 1,000 big-box retailers. More than half of those displays showed a video about the B-hyve's water-efficient features, and Orbit provided tear pads for retailers to promote available rebates for controllers. Recognizing that irrigation professionals and products were still in high demand during the pandemic, Orbit conducted quarterly virtual trainings with professionals to encourage them to install WaterSense labeled products.

Orbit Irrigation Products also partnered with local utility districts to conduct socially distant trainings for residents and water managers to show how WaterSense labeled controllers work to ensure smart watering. To help California communities that chose to enact the state's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, Orbit also helped prepare documents for contractors and consumers to specify and purchase WaterSense labeled products.

"Partnering with WaterSense has been extremely beneficial for the Orbit B-hyve brand. As a company that is focused on water conservation through smart technology, the partnership came naturally and helped to amplify our shared goal of making water conservation easier and more accessible to all consumers."

—Brad Wardle, Director of Marketing

RETAILER PARTNER OF THE YEAR

The Home Depot



The Home Depot has won a WaterSense Retailer Partner of the Year Award for its commitment to offering and promoting WaterSense labeled products in stores. With 100 percent of their in-store assortment of toilets, bathroom faucets, and showerheads being WaterSense labeled, customers who shop in one of their nearly 2,000 stores across the United States are assured of water savings. In 2020, The Home Depot worked with over 450 utility partners to launch their utility rebate incentives tool in stores and online, making it easy for customers to save both money and water when purchasing these products. The tool

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tracked over 47 million impressions for rebate offerings on WaterSense labeled products, representing over \$3.6 million in savings. Customers also received a total of \$66 million in WaterSense labeled product markdowns!

To educate customers on options for bathroom fixtures, The Home Depot conducted its Bathroom Refresh Workshop, featuring WaterSense labeled products, for over 10,000 participants in the beginning of 2020. They successfully pivoted their in-person workshops to virtual offerings by livestreaming their Homeowner 101 workshop three times in 2020, which garnered over 62,000 views. Home Depot account representatives also helped educate professional plumber and contractor customers. To educate employees, they provided web-based training, pocket guides for associates, and a green team manual that helps identify products that have less impact on the environment.

The Home Depot showed its dedication to water savings through various marketing and outreach activities in 2020, promoting WaterSense online, in stores, and during educational and sales events. These efforts garnered 533 billion impressions. The retailer placed 127 million print ads featuring WaterSense labeled products. On social media, The Home Depot promoted Fix a Leak Week, celebrated Earth Day, and made a WaterSense Pinterest pin that generated over 2.6 million impressions. They even continued a collaboration with the Georgia Aquarium with a display highlighting WaterSense and water savings.

BUILDER PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Fulton Homes



Fulton Homes won its second WaterSense Builder Partner of the Year Award. In 2020, Fulton Homes designed nearly 800 homes to meet WaterSense specifications, and over 300 of their homes earned the WaterSense label. This far exceeded the company's initial goal to earn the label on 270 homes.

Fulton also set a goal to achieve 100 percent usage of WaterSense labeled products in homes it built last year, and the company came close to achieving that goal.

Fulton Homes provided new employees training on WaterSense in 2020 and provided materials about WaterSense to its plumbing contractors. They also coordinated with site foremen and verification providers to ensure WaterSense specification requirements were followed. To further promote WaterSense, Fulton put the program mark on all its promotional materials and banners and mentioned the program in articles. Kids who visit Fulton homes received stickers about water savings.

As part of its commitment to sustainability, Fulton Homes participates in other programs that promote healthy, comfortable, and efficient homes. In 2020, the company became a Triple Crown winner, earning ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year, Indoor AirPLUS Leader, and a WaterSense Partner of the Year Award!

"Fulton Homes is thrilled to be recognized for receiving their second WaterSense Partner of the Year Award. We look forward to implementing WaterSense version 2.0 as water conservation is extremely important, particularly here in the desert."

—Doug Fulton, Chief Executive Officer

Learn More

WaterSense congratulates the 2021 Partners of the Year. For more information and to learn about all the benefits of partnership, visit www.epa.gov/watersense.