



Partners Made It Possible

2021 Sustained 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 nine Sustained Excellence Award winners in particular for making water savings possible in 2020, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

Athens-Clarke County (Georgia) Public Utilities Department Water Conservation Office



The Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department Water Conservation Office (WCO) earned a whopping fifth Sustained Excellence Award for its creative water efficiency—even with the challenges of conducting outreach in 2020. Due to COVID restrictions, WCO pivoted the popular Athens Water Festival to a “Festival in a Box,” sending 180 participants boxes filled with water-themed activities, a beach ball with the WaterSense logo, and fortune cookies with water-saving tips inside. Some recipients opened their boxes on camera during a live virtual event. WCO also created a virtual tour video of the Drinking Water Treatment Plant that included water conservation tips and WaterSense labeled product reminders.

During Fix a Leak Week, K-12th grade students submitted water-themed films for the annual Ripple Effect Film Project. The WCO typically celebrates winners during an in-person “blue carpet” premiere, but due to COVID restrictions, the event was postponed and redesigned for 2021. To promote Imagine a Day Without Water, WCO created 5,000 themed cup wraps to distribute at local coffee shops that said “This cup of Joe thanks to H₂O,” and 1,000 can coolers for local breweries that said “No water, no happy hour brew.” WCO’s ThinkAtTheSink.com website included the WaterSense “bath hacks” video in English and Spanish and a “Saving Water Outside” section with water-saving information and links to WaterSense outdoor tools. It’s no wonder WCO’s social media interactions increased from 2019 to 2020!



Themed cup wraps and can coolers.

Two local hardware stores helped distribute over 200 WaterSense labeled showerheads. Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department promoted this giveaway in its WaterSource newsletter, a bill stuffer sent to 36,000 customers, social media, and through its Little Lily educational program. Hardware stores also gave away over 100 toilet flappers and toilet leak tablets. Similar to previous years, the WCO continued showing WaterSense promotional videos at the local DMV with an estimated reach of 82,500.

City of Charlottesville

Despite challenges faced during the pandemic, the City of Charlottesville (Virginia) had an amazing year promoting water conservation and WaterSense in a virtual format and has earned its fourth WaterSense



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Sustained Excellence Award. Although its annual 5K race was cancelled due to COVID-19, the City promoted Fix a Leak Week through bill stuffers, its website, social media, and the WaterSense Twitter party, as well as through television spots featuring a barbershop quartet promoting fixing leaks and WaterSense labeled fixtures. The ad played over 1,500 times on cable weather and DIY channels and 500 times on local TV.

On social media, the City continued its weekly #WaterTipWednesday (or #WTW), with tips on how to save water at home, and posted over 500 times to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. To further engage residents from a distance, the City held a virtual “Imagine a Day Without Water” campaign and art contest with the theme “What Water Means to Me,” which had 120 submissions. The winners were honored during a local Cville360 news segment instead of an in-person event. Charlottesville also updated and revamped its website in 2020 with new content and WaterSense messaging and saw an increase in visitor traffic.

Prior to the pandemic, the City was able to participate in Kid*Vention, a hands-on science event held in February, and promoted WaterSense and water conservation with its Spin the Wheel game and by distributing leak detection dye tablets, WaterSense labeled faucet aerators, shower timers, rain gauges, and tooth brushes with reminders to turn the water off while brushing. To set a water-saving example to residents, the City’s new Energy and Water Management Policy requires installation of WaterSense labeled products in City buildings. Charlottesville’s Energy and Water Management Program also coordinated efforts during the pandemic by providing remote learning activity sheets for children that featured information on water conservation and WaterSense labeled products.



Spin the Wheel game.

Cobb County Water System



No stranger to the WaterSense Awards, Cobb County (Georgia) Water System has earned its fourth Sustained Excellence Award for its water-saving work in 2020. Because many residents were spending more time at home due to the pandemic, Cobb County targeted do-it-yourselfers during the Sprinkler Spruce-Up campaign and encouraged homeowners via social media to check if their irrigation systems were working efficiently during the spring. The County also promoted Sprinkler Spruce-Up in its summer 2020 newsletter, which was distributed to more

than 1,400 people. The article encouraged residents to use the Find a Pro tool on the WaterSense website to locate an irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program.

To educate customers during the pandemic, Cobb County conducted virtual lunch-and-learns. The first virtual lunch-and-learn topic was focused on Sprinkler Spruce-Up. Helping residents save even more water, Cobb County started examining high monthly water use among single-family residential customers and cross-referencing with older homes to target toilets and showerheads for replacement with WaterSense labeled models. In 2020, the county issued more than 1,400 residential toilet rebates in the form of a \$100 water bill credit and six commercial toilet rebates. The county also mailed free indoor water-saving kits to more than 150 customers that included WaterSense labeled aerators and a showerhead. The Water System continued its collaboration with a local electric cooperative, Cobb EMC, to retrofit a family’s home with WaterSense labeled toilets and showerheads during their annual Home Energy and Water Makeover.

The Cobb County Water System displayed WaterSense banners in its customer service lobby, and to promote the Your Better Bathroom campaign, included advertising in a monthly informational newsletter emailed to all county employees. For 2020’s Imagine a Day Without Water, Cobb County created a new video, “A Water Tale: Jake and the Three Spirits” that identified three bad water-wasting habits. Engaging children in the community, the county sponsored a coloring book contest, inviting fourth and fifth grade students to draw Tappy Turtle, the Water System’s water conservation mascot, and Allatoona Ally, Allatoona Lake’s mascot, to promote water-saving habits at home. Twelve winners are chosen each year, and their drawings are compiled into a coloring book that is distributed throughout the county.



Coloring book contest reception.

Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District



The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District earned its fourth WaterSense Sustained Excellence Award for its work promoting WaterSense and water conservation. In 2020, the District pivoted its annual Water Drop Dash 5K during Fix a Leak Week to a completely virtual event, and invited nearly 30 local high school and college graphic design programs to participate in a T-shirt design competition for the race. For Fix a Leak Week, the District also developed the Be a Leak Detective resource as a digital learning tool for students to complete at home and promoted the new tool on social media.

Throughout the year, the District collaborated with other organizations to spread the word about water savings. The District presented at the Georgia Green Industry Association WinterGreen Expo on the District's requirements for large landscape irrigation systems and recommended WaterSense labeled products to meet those requirements. The District sponsored the Chattahoochee Nature Center's Native Plant Sale and distributed the WaterWise Landscape Guide at the event. They also distributed Sprinkler Spruce-Up information to utility customers and posted it to social media. In partnership with The Home Depot, the District revamped its toilet rebate program with new signage and tear-away information sheets for customers to save on WaterSense labeled toilets.

In 2020, the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District reestablished the Just a Drop quarterly e-newsletter and promoted WaterSense-related events and activities to 750 readers. They also created a new infographic, "10 Quick Tips to Conserve Water," which includes WaterSense labeled products, and ran a series of billboards focused on water conservation in the summer and fall. The District also held its seventh annual photo contest to complete a calendar with the WaterSense logo; 175 copies of the calendar were distributed to stakeholders.

"WaterSense labeled products set a high standard for efficiency and provide the foundation of our successful water conservation programs like the Toilet Replacement Program, which has rebated nearly 150,000 inefficient toilets since 2008, and our outdoor requirements for large landscapes. These programs, our innovative outreach events, and other successes in conservation and efficiency for our region have resulted in a continuous decline of water usage across the metro Atlanta area."

—Glenn Page, Chairman of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District

Citrus County (Florida) Utilities



Citrus County Utilities in Florida won its third Sustained Excellence Award for its dedication to promoting WaterSense campaigns and water-saving education and outreach. Citrus County celebrated Fix a Leak Week in-person before the pandemic began, and the second annual Mardi Gras-themed Shrimpapalooza festival kicked off the activities. Children decorated water-shaped masks, and parents received toilet leak information and free leak detection tablets. Kids also got in on the leak detective game during Citrus County's sixth annual classroom toilet leak detection challenge, where elementary classrooms tested more than 100 toilets and identified leaks for potential savings of more than 3,000 gallons of water per day.

In October, the utility celebrated Shower Better with a display in its lobby, where customers could get free WaterSense labeled showerheads or just learn about them through the utility's December newsletter. Early in the year, the utility continued its Schedule a Specialist program of free walkthroughs and assistance with residential irrigation systems and promotion of WaterSense labeled irrigation products. A total of 170 residents participated in the program in 2020; their pre- and post-installation water use data show a savings of nearly 10 million gallons of water as a result of the program!

Throughout the year, Citrus County Utilities also collaborated with other organizations to expand water savings. Working with the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority on an Irrigation Evaluation Initiative, the utility helped complete nearly 80 evaluations and installation of WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers. The utility helped WaterSense develop its *Remote Possibilities* tool and provided input that



Water-shaped mask at Shrimpapalooza.

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helped the Southwest Florida Water Management District design postcards highlighting WaterSense labeled products to help customers reduce water use.

The City of Plano (Texas)

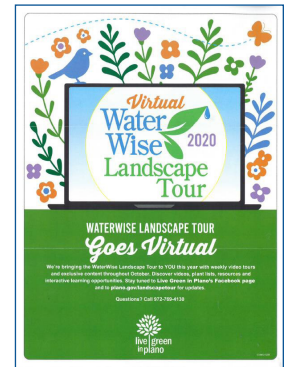


Throughout 2020, the City of Plano made a virtual splash in water conservation education, earning its second WaterSense Sustained Excellence Award in a row. The City hosted numerous remote events, including a Virtual Garden Green in Plano Fair, In the Know H2O, Rain Barrels 101, Virtual Sprinkler Fair, and a month-long Virtual WaterWise

Landscape Tour. For the tour, nearly 2,500 residents watched documentary-style videos about water-wise landscapes in the area. The City of Plano also turned its in-person presentations into webinars, adding photo demonstrations and video clips to promote Sprinkler Spruce-Up when COVID restrictions kept people from gathering, as well as a song parody on outdoor water use to keep things interesting!

To celebrate Fix a Leak Week, the City encouraged families to become leak detectives and save water indoors by sharing WaterSense's kids leak detection activities and leak repair graphics on its website and Facebook page. To help residents save water outside, the City of Plano actively promoted WaterMyYard.org, a tool developed by the North Texas

Municipal Water District and Texas A&M AgriLife that provides personalized watering recommendations based on local weather and landscape details.



Virtual Water Wise Landscape Tour Flyer.

"We are grateful to WaterSense for providing the tools and resources we need to inspire conservation actions from our residents. It takes many small actions to create big impact, and we are pleased to be a part of the larger, collaborative effort to protect our most precious resource."

—Rachel Patterson, Director of Environmental Health and Sustainability

The City of Plano celebrated the 10-year anniversary of its Residential Water Conservation Rebate Program in 2020 with newsletter content and social media posts. Rebates were provided for over 750 WaterSense labeled toilets and more than 100 rain/freeze sensors and WaterSense labeled weather-based irrigation controllers in 2020. The City distributed the Live Green in Plano monthly e-newsletter to nearly 9,000 subscribers in 2020 and sent five water-focused utility bill inserts and seasonal water conservation bill messages to its 84,000 customers.

Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership



The Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership in California has earned its fifth WaterSense Sustained Excellence Award as a professional certifying organization, for continuing to make their Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) trainings and certification accessible to a wide audience. In response to the pandemic, the Partnership expanded its online training capability, and virtual courses were offered by May 2020. The Partnership also coordinated with WaterSense to develop online classes, virtual irrigation audits, and online test proctoring for professional certification. Certified irrigation professionals could access webinars and technical guides through the Partnership's quarterly newsletters and social media.

In 2020, the Partnership worked with several colleges, including Mendocino College and Santa Rosa Junior College, to incorporate QWEL into their landscape irrigation courses. Additionally, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California launched a dual certification program in collaboration with the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) to offer a combined course of QWEL, along with CLCA's Certified Water Manager Program. The Partnership offers free Water Smart Home evaluations to promote QWEL certified professionals to residents. During the pandemic, the program was temporarily conducted virtually, and participants were given a do-it-yourself kit. More than 1,200 evaluations were performed in 2020.

In 2020, the Partnership also continued to support a pilot with the California Department of Water Resources, "Making Conservation a California Way of Life," which tests proposed residential water use targets for irrigation.

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The Partnership also co-promoted QWEL trainings and continuing education credit opportunities with the California Landscape Contractors Association's local North Coast Chapter newsletters.

Kohler Co.

The Kohler logo consists of the word "KOHLER" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the letter "R".

Kohler Co. won its seventh WaterSense Sustained Excellence Award this year, as it continued its commitment to promoting WaterSense and producing labeled products. In 2020, Kohler launched a collection of new WaterSense labeled fixtures, including 14 new toilets, 36 faucets, 25 showerheads, and 20 new urinal/flushometer bowls and valves.

Throughout the year, Kohler consistently promoted WaterSense on its website, products, digital communication, and in the Kohler Design Center—which despite being shut down for three months during the pandemic, had 28,000 visitors in 2020. Kohler's 2020 media placements and social media posts mentioning WaterSense exceeded 360 million and 660 million impressions, respectively.

The company demonstrated its commitment to water efficiency by participating in WaterSense product specification reviews, and by funding research conducted by the Alliance for Water Efficiency that assessed the water savings potential of affordability programs focused on conservation in Detroit. During the pandemic, the KOHLER Relief Showering Trailer, which features WaterSense labeled fixtures, was deployed to several temporary field hospitals to refresh and recharge frontline healthcare workers. Kohler continued its philanthropic efforts by donating plumbing fixtures to Habitat for Humanity homes built in Wisconsin, as well as to a Michigan pilot program preparing to upgrade water efficiency in older homes outside Detroit.

KB Home



For the seventh year in a row, builder partner KB Home has earned a Sustained Excellence Award for building WaterSense labeled homes. In 2020, KB Home built over 250 homes that earned the WaterSense label, representing 2.5 percent of the homes it built throughout the year and an 8 percent increase in its WaterSense labeled homes compared to 2019. KB Home also installed WaterSense labeled faucets and fixtures in all of the homes built in 2020.

KB led the way for other builder partners to benefit from the WaterSense Homes Program, Version 2 by participating in a pilot of the new specification with EPA and the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) in Las Vegas. As part of its efforts, KB Home hosted a demonstration of the HERSH2O rating system during the RESNET Conference in Arizona in February 2020, with a model home that featured WaterSense labeled fixtures and water-efficient landscaping. When COVID-19 prevented in-person gatherings, KB Home still promoted the benefits of WaterSense labeled homes and products during a virtual version of its annual Suppliers Conference.

KB Home requires specialized training for some employees to learn how to communicate the benefits of WaterSense labeled homes and products. KB also provides home buyers with education on WaterSense throughout each step of the sales process, from a visit to the design studio to a pre-drywall tour of a home. And to reach a wider audience all year long, KB Home's social media presence included messaging about WaterSense and water conservation.

Water conservation is a growing imperative for homebuyers, local communities and local governments. The WaterSense Homes Program is a perfect template for providing water-saving features in new homes that reduce owners' water bills and may help to mitigate strain on local communities. We are honored to be recognized by the WaterSense Program for Sustained Excellence.

—Jacob Atalla, Vice President, Innovation and Sustainability

Learn More

WaterSense congratulates the 2021 Sustained Excellence Award winners. For more information and to learn about all the benefits of partnership, visit www.epa.gov/watersense.