



Partners Help People Save 2022 Sustained Excellence Awards

WaterSense and its more than 2,100 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 16 years, WaterSense partners have helped Americans save more than 6.4 trillion gallons of water. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is pleased to recognize 12 Sustained Excellence Award winners in particular for continuing their efforts to help consumers and businesses save water in 2021.

SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department Water Conservation Office



Athens-Clarke County (Georgia) Public Utilities Department’s Water Conservation Office (WCO) has won its sixth Sustained Excellence Award for its dedication to WaterSense and water efficiency outreach. WCO combined the WaterSense Your Better Yard campaign with its H₂GrOw Native Plant Collection promotion to encourage water-efficient landscapes. The plant collection was available for a discount at a local garden shop. Athens-Clarke shared design plans and WaterSense Your Better Yard tools to help local gardeners create water-smart landscapes that meet their lifestyles.

Outdoor water efficiency was the focus of WCO’s collaboration efforts in 2021. The Georgia Association of Water Professionals’ quarterly publication—which reaches over 3,000 members—featured the article “Smart Irrigation Controllers for Landscape Irrigation” in summer 2021. The article included information on WaterSense specifications for smart irrigation controllers. Athens-Clarke also partnered with the University of Georgia (UGA) Extension Office to inform their monthly Green Thumb Lectures, which averaged 50 participants per webinar.

To promote water conservation among college students at UGA, Athens-Clarke reached out to landlords and property managers to offer a “water welcome kit” for renters. WCO distributed 5,000 kits, which included the WaterSense clean/dirty dishes magnet, a toilet dye-tablet packet, and a customized WaterSense Welcome Kit one-pager. Athens-Clarke also hosted a WaterSmart customer portal as an online management tool for water customers to increase their water efficiency and improve their Water Score—leading to over 1,000 new enrollments in 2021.



Water welcome kit for renters.

Citrus County Utilities



Another year of water education and savings means a fourth Sustained Excellence Award for Citrus County (Florida) Utilities. For Fix a Leak Week 2021, the utility promoted the American Water Works Association’s Drop Savers Poster Contest; kindergarten through 12th grade students made posters with the theme “Fixing Leaks Saves Water.” Citrus County and Keep Citrus County Beautiful also declared the 26th annual Save Our Water Week theme to be Fix

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Leaks and distributed 1,500 brochures to businesses and libraries throughout the county to promote a list of leak-fixing activities.

Citrus County Utilities proclaimed Smart Irrigation Month in July with a press release and advertised WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers. The utility hosted three online Irrigation 101 workshops in January, March, and August 2021, and 82 people attended. The utility mailed rebate applications and the WaterSense irrigation controller fact sheet to plumbing and irrigation contractors to promote its rebates for both smart controllers and toilet rebates, leading to nearly 70 incentives being issued in 2021.

Citrus County continued its WaterSense Labeled Irrigation Controller Installation Program in 2021 with a focus on high-water-using homes. The program provided onsite training on how to program controllers, and employees performed an irrigation checkup with the homeowner. Over 200 homeowners participated, and more than 75 percent of them found they reduced outdoor water use. In 2021, the County began emailing reminders to customers with WaterSense labeled controllers that the device will automatically adjust in response to cold weather and rainfall.



A student holds her Drop Savers Poster Contest submission.

City of Charlottesville



No stranger to WaterSense honors, the City of Charlottesville (Virginia) has earned its fifth Sustained Excellence Award. For Fix a Leak Week, the City created a Home Scavenger Hunt to help the community get to know their water fixtures, identifying any WaterSense labeled models and completing a worksheet to help them check for leaks. The City also created a River Scavenger Hunt with yard signs along a one-mile stretch of the river walk with tips about finding and fixing leaks. In 2021, the City's Fix a Leak Family 5-kilometer race was virtual and accessible for all, with digital materials that promoted the WaterSense 10-Minute Leak Challenge.

Charlottesville created a month-long social media campaign promoting saving water at work, using the *WaterSense at Work* guide, several WaterSense workplace graphics, and the Alliance for Water Efficiency's *Commercial Kitchen Water Use Efficiency and Best Practice Guide*.

As part of a local Better Business Challenge to reduce commercial buildings' impact on energy, water, waste, and transportation, Charlottesville's Energy and Water Management Program (EWMP) evaluated all schools and City buildings for water improvements and was able to implement several water-saving actions over the course of the competition. As a result of this effort and other completed actions, the City was honored as a Better Business Challenge winner. For Earth Day, EWMP brought a hands-on learning experience to 400 fifth graders in conjunction with the Virginia Discovery Museum and Community Climate Collaborative. In addition to providing take-home Climate Action Kits with an Earth Day leak detection activity for the kids, the City continued to provide water conservation kits to residents throughout the year.



Charlottesville's Climate Action Kit partners.

The City of Plano

The City of Plano (Texas) has earned a third Sustained Excellence Award for their continuous water conservation efforts and dedication to the WaterSense program. Because COVID restrictions were still in place in March 2021, the City instead hosted a virtual Fix a Leak Week workshop in partnership with the Plano Neighborhood Services Department, and it was one of the City's highest-attended webinars of that type to date, with over 80 attendees.



The City's three-part Sprinkler Spruce-Up Series returned as a webinar series in May, and the presentations featured additional photo demonstrations and video clips to maximize teaching effectiveness and engagement—a

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new feature in 2021. There were nearly 100 attendees, and each of the three webinars were added to a menu of webinars available for residents to view on-demand on the City's video channel. By summer, Plano was able to return to in-person education with a Sprinkler Fair in both June and July. Attendees rotated through lectures and hands-on learning stations led by local licensed irrigators.

The City of Plano held its ninth annual WaterWise Landscape Tour in October featuring several landscapes with regionally appropriate plants and some of the landscaping practices promoted in the WaterSense Your Better Yard campaign. The City also created a documentary-style video about one of the landscapes that visitors could watch in addition to visiting in-person. It was the City's highest-attended WaterWise Landscape Tour to date, with over 1,700 visitors. For the holidays, the City also offered a webinar and video series on green gift ideas, including WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers.

City of Sacramento Department of Utilities



After winning WaterSense Partner of the Year Awards the past two years, the City of Sacramento (California) Department of Utilities took their water conservation and creativity to new heights, earning their first Sustained Excellence Award. In response to the drought conditions in California, the City declared a Stage 1 Water Watch early in 2021, directing City staff, residents, and businesses to voluntarily reduce water by 10 percent. Later, the City declared a Stage 2 Water Shortage, with a voluntary 20 percent city-wide water use reduction. Sacramento's Water Conservation Office incentivized residents by doubling their turf conversion, irrigation upgrade, and toilet rebate amounts. As a result, they received the highest number of applications ever for the month of July as well as for the year, replacing the most square feet of turf and rebating the most toilets since the program started.

In 2021, the City wrapped up its pilot toilet replacement program, RE-DO the LOO, which provided a labor reimbursement for WaterSense labeled toilets installed in multifamily properties within Sacramento's disadvantaged areas. Over 150 toilets were installed as part of the ReDO the LOO in 2021. Additionally, the City continued to offer its Leak Free Sacramento program, where a City-selected contractor repaired leaks for customers that qualified for the program.

In September 2021, the city hosted its first in-person event since COVID restrictions, Mulch Mayhem, and gave away 350 yards of mulch to residents. The City also produced six virtual webinars in 2021, including presentations on the 10-minute leak challenge, virtual office hours on rebate information and smart irrigation, a Lunch-and-Learn on smart irrigation for trees, and River Friendly landscape tips.



Mulch was given away during the Mulch Mayhem event.

Cobb County Water System



Continuing its conservation streak, Cobb County (Georgia) Water System (CCWS) has earned a fifth Sustained Excellence Award. As part of their educational efforts during Fix a Leak Week 2021, the Water System developed an instructional video on how to use your water meter to find silent leaks. In addition to participating in the Water Drop Dash 5K race with partner Metro North Georgia Water Planning District, CCWS also promoted Fix a Leak Week during the Wonder of Water Weekend at a local park, reaching over 100 community members with information on the 10-minute challenge to find and fix leaks, giving away WaterSense labeled showerheads, and demonstrating how to replace them.

New in 2021, 37 Cobb County resident volunteers completed a water conservation training program to educate consumers during community events. During their training, the volunteers learned about the WaterSense program and WaterSense labeled products. In 2021, CCWS also began tracking multifamily buildings with high water use; properties built prior to 1993 were targeted for direct marketing to participate in the commercial toilet rebate program that offers a \$50 credit on the building's water bill for replacing up to 100 older toilets with WaterSense labeled models.

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Cobb County continued to offer residents a free indoor water savings kit, complete with faucet aerators and a showerhead, which it promoted through social media, webinars, outreach events, and its website. CCWS also sponsored a coloring book contest, inviting fourth and fifth graders to draw its mascot Tappy Turtle saving and protecting water. Twelve winners were made into a coloring book that was distributed throughout the county, and the winners were honored at a virtual reception.

Irvine Ranch Water District



Irvine Ranch Water District

After winning three other WaterSense Awards, the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) in California has earned their first Sustained Excellence Award. IRWD once again promoted Fix a Leak Week with a Don't Spring a Leak online workshop that had over 150 virtual attendees. In addition, the Water District sponsored a photo contest, which involved 600 people fixing leaks. IRWD also hosted 10 RightScape workshops with nearly 900 attendees, along with Sprinkler Spruce-Up and Control Your Controller workshops.

In 2021, IRWD launched the Water Feature Improvement Program; for customers who use an automatic float fill valve, Irvine Ranch offers a free electronic water level sensor as a replacement. This sensor shuts off water supply if there is a crack or break in a customer's water feature to ensure consistent water height. Additionally, IRWD continued providing rebates for WaterSense labeled toilets, controllers, and spray sprinkler bodies and distributing water-saving faucet aerators and showerheads for free.

As for its collaboration with other partners, IRWD co-hosted a Landscape Design presentation promoting their Turf Removal Program with the Municipal Water District of Orange County for over 100 attendees. IRWD also continued its collaboration with the University of California Davis' Center for Water Efficiency to evaluate and monitor the results of water- and energy- efficient devices, including WaterSense labeled toilets and weather-based irrigation controllers, installed at nearly 2,000 residential properties.

KB Home

Builder partner KB Home has earned an impressive eight Sustained Excellence Awards in a row for its leadership in building WaterSense® labeled homes. KB Home built over 1,000 homes that earned the WaterSense label in 2021 alone, representing 10 percent of all homes constructed by the company that year. These homes also represented 77 percent of the builder's new homes built in Las Vegas, reducing the impact of new development in an area prone to water shortages.



KB Home included WaterSense labeled faucets and fixtures in all the homes the company built in 2021—nearly 13,500 homes in total. The company also incorporated additional indoor water efficiency measures such as efficient hot water delivery systems and 1.5 gallon-per-minute kitchen faucets. KB Home offered a range of outdoor water efficiency features like climate-appropriate landscapes, weather-based irrigation controllers, and rotary spray sprinkler nozzles. Additionally, as part of a pilot program, KB built homes to Version 2.0 of the WaterSense specification; these homes use at least 30 percent less water than typical homes.



WaterSense labeled KB Home.

KB required all new employees to complete a training course focused on sustainability efforts with a focus on water conservation. Some employees were required to complete further training that prepares them to articulate the benefits of owning a WaterSense labeled home. The KB Home Design Studio staff is trained to discuss WaterSense labeled products and explain other water efficiency options for homes. Homeowners even receive an orientation about the water-efficient features of their new home during a walk-through or "behind the walls" tour. Always looking for future water-saving opportunities, KB Home also supported a team of innovators to develop a low-cost and low-energy water recycling system.

Kohler Co.



Kohler Co. won its eighth Sustained Excellence Award after another significant year of helping consumers and businesses conserve water by promoting WaterSense labeled products and educating architects, designers, builders, consumers, and more about water conservation with a variety of virtual and in-person outreach.

Kohler@Home, a digital experience showcasing new products and innovations plus sessions focused on sustainability and water conservation, attracted over 17,000 attendees. Another virtual event, Kohler Living, had 36,000 registrants; over 40 industry experts discussed sustainable home solutions and new water-saving products. Kohler offered four sustainability and water-related in-person and online courses to sales and showroom associates, as well as to the design community, ranging from plumbers to architects, and reaching over 1,700 people. Kohler also hosted customized training for over 180 kitchen-and-bath sales and marketing associates in partnership with the U.S. Green Building Council. Kohler team members learned how the company's products, including WaterSense labeled products, can contribute to LEED points.

The company further demonstrated its commitment to WaterSense in numerous ways. For example, Kohler promoted an offer for WaterSense labeled products on its website for a month in response to California's governor asking residents to cut water use by 15 percent. In 2022, Kohler released its first ESG report, which featured savings from WaterSense labeled products as of 2021. The company also introduced eight new tank-type toilets, over 40 new bathroom faucets, and over 70 showerheads that all earned the WaterSense label. Additionally, Kohler donated WaterSense labeled products to a 2021 pilot project to reduce water waste and bills in 100 homes in two disadvantaged communities in Michigan.

“As part of Kohler’s Better Planet strategy, we’re not only committed to developing environmentally friendly products, but also to educating consumers on saving water. Innovating plumbing products in the water efficiency space is essential for the health and safety of our customers and protecting the environment. For over a decade, Kohler has embraced the WaterSense program. It has made a tremendous impact in how we make progress through Kohler’s new product development process, as well as build awareness among our customers and partners so they can also be good stewards of a better planet.”

—Ratish Namboothiry, Director of Sustainability and Innovation for Good, Kohler Co.

Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District



The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District has earned its fifth Sustained Excellence Award for its continued dedication to water conservation. The District promoted Fix a Leak Week by making the 10-Minute Challenge the topic of its 2021 High School Video Contest. Students were asked to create a video in the style of a public service announcement showing how families can take the 10-Minute Challenge to check for leaks, save water, and reduce their water bills. Nearly 80 students participated and created 52 videos for the contest in both English and Spanish.

In May 2021, the District partnered with Georgia Public Broadcasting to host Live Exploration: Georgia's Water during national Drinking Water Week. The one-hour live televised and online event reached nearly 80,000 elementary school students, teachers, and parents in schools and homes across the state. Participants learned about Georgia's river systems, the water cycle, the water treatment process, and how to protect and conserve water through experiments, activities, recorded interviews, and a live Q&A on Twitter. In April, the District was the presenting sponsor for the Chattahoochee Nature Center's Spring Native Plant Sale, where participants received water-saving giveaways such as faucet aerators, toilet flappers, hose spray nozzles, and the WaterWise Landscape Guide.

To further drive water efficiency across the metropolitan area, the District proposed Water Efficiency Code Requirements for review in 2021 to be adopted as part of the District's 2022 Water Resources Plan. For indoor fixtures, one proposed requirement is that all new showerheads and lavatory faucets or aerators installed in metropolitan Atlanta shall be WaterSense labeled starting January 1, 2024. Additionally, all outdoor landscape irrigation systems, excluding single-family home systems, must include a WaterSense irrigation controller.

Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership



After another year of leadership as a professional certifying organization (PCO) focused on water efficiency, the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership in California has earned its sixth Sustained Excellence Award as a PCO that shares its certification with other entities. The Partnership promoted its WaterSense labeled Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) class to residents in Sonoma, Marín, and Mendocino counties during California’s dry season by including a promotional flyer in more than 10,000 drought kits distributed at three “Drought Drop-By” events by 14 different water utilities.

In 2021, PCOs that use the QWEL program issued a total of 561 certifications, including 17 certifications issued directly by the Partnership—a 33 percent increase from 2020. To make the program more accessible, Sonoma-Marín offered online testing and developed hybrid courses to make obtaining certification more accessible when in-person classes and testing were not feasible. Courses and exams were also offered in Spanish. Monterey Peninsula Community College (MPCC) was able to hold their first QWEL training when the Partnership shared its course curriculum digitally through the Canvas Learning Management System. This helped to expedite MPCC’s process by sharing files and recorded lectures instead of having to build a program from scratch.



Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership also collaborated with the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District to obtain California Department of Water Resources grant funds for development of a QWEL rainwater catchment training module and paired it with a pilot rebate program for these systems. By offering regional training to landscapers on these systems, the partners hoped to increase the capacity of landscapers to offer installation services for catchment systems to their customers.

Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District



After winning several WaterSense Partner of the Year Awards, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District in California has earned its first Sustained Excellence Award. The Upper District promoted numerous WaterSense outreach efforts throughout 2021, including Fix a Leak Week, Shower Better, Sprinkler Spruce-Up, Save Water at Home, We’re for Water, Find an Irrigation Pro, and “bath hacks.” For the end of the year, the Upper District produced a “12 Days of Conservation Christmas” video featuring WaterSense labeled devices, water-saving techniques, and drought-tolerant plants set to a 12 Days of Christmas tune and posted it on their website, social media, and e-newsletter to over 13,000 contacts.

During 2021, the District hosted 10 water-efficient landscape webinars with over 500 participants. The workshops discussed best practices and devices to reduce landscape, outdoor, and gardening water usage, as well as WaterSense labeled products and how to find an irrigation professional who is certified by a WaterSense labeled program. The District continued their Water Smart Home Program, which provides direct installation of WaterSense labeled products and includes leak kits with WaterSense labeled products and leak detection materials in a variety of languages.

Upper San Gabriel Valley supported a landscape water efficiency program with Suburban Water Systems that completely updated the landscapes in two locations and featured WaterSense labeled products. The Upper District also offered water education grants of \$1,000 to projects at K-12 schools for water efficiency curriculum or projects that included lawn retrofits and other irrigation measures.



“12 Days of Conservation Christmas” video.

Learn More

WaterSense congratulates the 2022 Sustained Excellence Award winners. For more information and to learn about all the benefits of partnership, visit www.epa.gov/watersense.