

WATER CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

CASE STUDY

Chanhassen WaterWise Program

PROGRAMS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

During the summer of 2007, drought conditions occurred in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. As a result, the City of Chanhassen (City) experienced severe demands to its water system and two of the wells were strained to the point of failure. In response, the City was forced to put into place a total watering ban. Many of the residents lacked awareness of the increased water demand that their irrigation practices were causing and continued to water their lawns, despite the ban. At this point the City began to create the WaterWise program with the goal of promoting water conservation through the distribution of educational materials and promotion of rebates for the implementation of water efficient technologies.

In 2008 and 2009, when the project first started, it focused solely on residential water usage. During 2008, rebates were offered for switching over residential landscaping to low water demand native landscaping, and for installing water efficient technologies and fixtures. The City also implemented a water audit program where employees would perform a detailed audit of a home's irrigation system. In 2009, the rebate programs ended and the City shifted its focus towards conservation education. In 2010, the target audience was expanded to include Homeowners Associations (HOAs). From 2011 to 2013, the focus was narrowed to mainly high volume users, including commercial and residential properties. More detailed information about the programs in each phase is provided below:

PROJECT LOCATION

Chanhassen, Minnesota

PROJECT OWNER

City of Chanhassen

- Krista Spreiter
- Terry Jeffery

TIMELINE

Start date: 2007

End date: Ongoing

Year	Program Components
2008	Irrigation audits, landscape rebates, appliance and fixture rebates, conservation contest, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum classes
2009	Information packet and weekly e-newsletter, Water Festival Weekend at Arboretum
2010-2011	Information packet and weekly e-newsletter, HOA irrigation audits and e-newsletter distribution, prize drawings
2012-2013	Commercial and HOA irrigation audits, education using the Connection, City website, and social media

Image source: City of Chanhassen

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HOW WAS THE PUBLIC INVOLVED AND HOW HAVE THEY RESPONDED?

During the first three years of the program approximately 50 community members volunteered to have their water use tracked and to participate in a conservation contest and newsletter mailing list. The City also set up booths at fairs and festivals, sent out flyers, added conservation messages to water bills, and posted articles in the City's newsletter and newspaper in order to get the word out about water conservation.



Image source: City of Chanhassen

DID THE PROJECT CHANGE WATER USAGE?

The amount of water used is dependent on rainfall, as irrigation is a significant component of residential water usage. There was a significant drop in water usage after the project was implemented; however, that year also had ample rainfall. In subsequent years, water usage has fluctuated. According to City staff, it is too early in the project to draw any conclusions about shifts in water usage.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY ISSUES? HOW WERE THEY RESOLVED?

One of the biggest unanticipated issues was the amount of time required to conduct a water audit. It has taken up more staff time than originally anticipated. In order to deal with this, the City hired a consultant who volunteered most of their time to help with the audits at the beginning of the program. The City has also certified one staff member in the WaterSense Professional Certification Program for Irrigation Audits, and this individual now conducts all of the irrigation audits that the City provides. This individual was certified in 2012.

HAS THE PROJECT BEEN A SUCCESS? WHAT ARE THE FUTURE STEPS?

It is still too early in the project to judge whether or not it has been successful. In 2008 and 2009, water use of the participants was tracked. Data indicated that in 2008, when incentives were used, water consumption decreased among the program participants. This was also a year of ample rainfall, however. Water usage shifted back up again in 2009, when the program utilized only education.

Since implementation, the project has evolved. When one approach didn't work, the City tried another. One of the biggest benefits of the project thus far has been the increase in staff and public awareness about water conservation in general. Going forward, the program plans to continue to focus on commercial, institutional, and high volume users, but the main focus will continue to be on irrigation water usage. In addition, the program will expand to include demonstration projects and incentives for commercial users and residential high volume users. The City also plans to expand the program to focus on stormwater reuse projects as well.

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