

Section 12: EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

INTRODUCTION

Education and public awareness is essential to effective water resources management. The 2003 Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan developed an education and public awareness program that has made significant progress in reaching the Metro Water District population with its messages on water supply and water conservation over the last five years.

The Metro Water District education and awareness program is specifically designed to:

- Raise public awareness of water issues and needs to foster support for solutions;
- Educate the public and other identified target groups in order to increase awareness and encourage behavioral changes; and
- Coordinate with other public as well as private entities to maximize the visibility of the Metro Water District and its messages.

The Metro Water District education and public awareness program is comprised of two elements: a regional program managed by the Metro Water District staff; and education activities undertaken by local governments. The Metro Water District provides a regional education and public awareness program that works through the Water Supply and Water Conservation Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) to expand upon the key water supply and conservation themes identified in this plan and develop mass media content and educational tools, including a comprehensive website, brochures and presentation materials. The local governments' role in education and public awareness is to reach out to specific groups in their community, provide educational materials and share knowledge of subject matters with the public by undertaking specific education and outreach activities. Without local implementation of the education program the full potential of this plan cannot be realized.

The following pages outline the key messages, the identified targeted audiences and various delivery techniques. This is followed by an overview of the Metro Water District's regional education and public awareness program and activities. The final part of this section includes the local education and public awareness requirements.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS APPROACH

WATER SUPPLY AND WATER CONSERVATION MESSAGES

The Metro Water District along with the Water Supply and Water Conservation TCC has created central messages, identified below, for both the regional and local water supply and water conservation education and public awareness program.

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- With limited water supplies in the Metro Water District, outdoor water use is considered consumptive and should be minimized. Tools and techniques such as native, drought tolerant landscaping, better irrigation controls, use of recycled water for car washing and other outdoor water use education will help minimize these consumptive uses.
- Water is a precious resource and “water wasting” should be avoided. Water wasting includes activities such as runoff from over-watering landscaping, irrigation during rainfall events, not repairing leaks, and other wasteful activities.
- As the Atlanta region develops, water efficient new homes and green buildings should be promoted. There is a great deal of interest from the public as well as builders on creating more water efficient new homes and buildings.
- Increased understanding of “typical” usage and a customer’s own historical usage will provide water users with basic information they need to reduce water demands.
- Indirect potable reuse, which consists of returning highly treated reclaimed water to the natural environment (reservoir, storage reservoir, or stream) where it mixes with receiving waters and is eventually reused, and is a valuable means of sustaining the Metro Water District’s water supply.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Identifying stakeholders helps in tailoring messages and education materials. While regional water conservation messages will be consistent, specific information may be more applicable to certain audiences. The Metro Water District has identified the appropriate target audiences for the Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan in Table 12-1.

TABLE 12-1
Education Focus for Target Audiences

Target Audience	Education Focus
General Public	Basic concepts of water efficiency and conservation including how individual actions can make an impact.
Residents	Residents must be educated about how to conserve water at home and understand water conservation pricing structures for water supply. Understanding their water use and the importance of not wasting water is key information for residents to start making small behavioral changes that will conserve water.
Students / Schools	Instilling water conservation messaging in students is important to developing conservation-minded habits and behaviors at a young age. The education and support of the teachers and schools is vital to getting the messages to students.
Home Gardeners	Proper knowledge on water-wise landscaping, irrigation system operation and maintenance and appropriate levels of outdoor watering is important for this audience.

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Target Audience	Education Focus
Urban Agriculture (landscapers, irrigators etc.)	This audience should to be educated on the need to incorporate water conservation measures into the daily lives of their customers.
Golf Courses	Golf course owners and staff should be educated on implementing water conservation and water reuse best management practices.
Plumbers	This audience should to be educated on the need to incorporate water conservation measures into the daily lives of their customers.
Builders/ Developers/ Designer Professionals	This audience should be educated on the importance of installing water efficient appliances and fixtures in new homes and buildings.
Real Estate Professionals	Real estate professionals should have a general understanding of the limited water resources in the region and the importance of installing water efficient fixtures and appliances in both new and older homes.
Offices/ Retail	This audience needs to be educated on how to save water in an office environment, this includes making sure the building, business operations, cooling towers and employees are all water efficient.
Restaurant / Food Service	Restaurant owners and manager should be educated on water conserving commercial kitchen appliances and fixtures and on ways to conserve water in restrooms. Staff should understand how to appropriately use appliances and fixtures and be knowledgeable about other ways to conserve water in their day to day activities in the kitchen.
Laundry Facilities and Linen Suppliers	This audience should be educated on water efficient processes, commercial appliances and fixtures that can be used to improve their water efficiency while continuing to abide by all applicable health regulations.
Hotels	Hotels have more plumbing and water using fixtures than most standard commercial operations. Hotels should understand the importance of finding and fixing leaks, the water savings that can be generated by installing water efficient fixtures as well as the understand the messaging for restaurants and laundry facilities.
Health Care Facilities	Health care facilities may operate equipment such as x-ray machines, sanitizers and sterilizers that use water and should be encouraged to use them in a manner that conserves water while continuing to abide by all applicable health and safety standards. These facilities typically have many bathrooms and sinks and water efficiency should be promoted in these areas.
Heavy / Light Industrial	Industries should understand their water use, conserve water at their facilities and educate employees on how to conserve water.
Car Washes	Car washes should be encouraged to conserve water by retrofitting existing facilities and/or maintaining water recycling systems.

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Target Audience	Education Focus
Water Systems	Water professionals need to be informed on the process and solutions within the Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan for their understanding, and to ensure that there is a coordinated approach that supports the goals of the Metro Water District. Utility employees need to be educated on water conservation methods to be able to inform their customers on how to save water.
Local Elected Officials / Governing Boards	Importance of promoting and sufficiently funding the implementation of the Metro Water District's conservation measures.

DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

There are a number of ways to reach target audiences in a public education effort both at a local and regional level. Some examples of these delivery methods are outlined below.

Internet

- **Website** – An internet site or page can provide an inexpensive way to foster awareness and education of water supply and water conservation issues at the community or regional level. A website can also serve as an information clearinghouse for other educational materials, and provide resources and additional links for target groups such as the general public, the development communities, and various industries.
- **Email** – Email newsletters can provide information of upcoming outreach events as well as tips on water supply management and conservation for targeted audiences and the general public. Email is often the least expensive way to reach a larger number of individuals and entities.
- **Streaming media** – Tools such as streaming audio and video, webcasts, online training workshops, and other interactive electronic media tools provide additional opportunities for reaching target audiences.

Printed Materials

- **Brochures & Fact Sheets** – Brochures, fact sheets and other literature can be for general information or provide messages and tips specific to a particular topic or target group. Printed materials often complement other education and public awareness activities such as public outreach events, workshops, and on-site inspections of businesses.
- **Bill Inserts** – Printed materials can be designed to accompany utility bills or other correspondence to local citizens and businesses. Inserts can include brochures, newsletters tips on best management practices and events notices. Bill inserts are an excellent way to distribute educational materials without additional postage expenses.
- **CD / DVDs and DVD-ROMs** are mediums for providing interactive educational material and are especially well-suited for youth and classroom education. In addition, video DVDs can be used to distribute content such as public service announcements (PSAs), video programs, and instructional/training videos.

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- **Posters** – Wall posters provide a great deal of information quickly to the target audience at a stationary location and can be displayed at locations such as libraries, schools, and other public locations.

Mass Media

- **Press Relations** – Both local communities and the Metro Water District can work with the media to ensure coverage of water supply and water conservation issues and activities. This can include both articles and events listings in general circulation newspapers, specialty papers, and regional magazines; radio and television interviews; features on radio and television news and public affairs programming; and coverage of events such as water conservation fairs and community events.
- **Television Public Service Announcements** – Television advertising using PSAs provide an immediate impact with a visual message. Broadcast channels reach a wide audience but are high-priced. Cable television offers local communities the ability to target their citizens and even tailor advertising to specific channels and audiences.
- **Radio Public Service Announcements** – Radio PSAs are an alternative to television and provide a less expensive way to reach a large number of individuals with water conservation messages and tips.
- **Outdoor Advertising** – Billboards and other outdoor advertising such as bus shelter ads can be a way to reach audiences through a different medium. These outdoors ads are well suited to short theme messages and specific tips on water conservation.
- **Other Advertising** – Other advertising methods that may be considered include movie theater PSAs, paid ads in newspapers and print magazines, and sponsorship of traffic and/or weather spots on radio.

Outreach and Involvement

- **Workshops** – Workshops and seminars opportunities to provide more detailed information and training to citizens, businesses and industry groups.
- **Speakers Bureau** – A speaker's bureau provides an opportunity for government staff and other professionals to address community organizations, business groups, homeowners' associations, church groups and educational institutions on issues related to water supply and water conservation management.
- **Events** – Hosting or participation in community events provides an opportunity for the distribution of information and resources directly to target communities. In addition, topic-specific events such as water conservation fairs, Earth Day events, school fairs, etc. are an important way to involve citizens directly in water supply and water conservation management efforts.
- **Kiosks / Exhibits** – A kiosk or exhibit provides a way to present information and educational messages at workshops and other events. Exhibits may be permanent or portable and can have static displays, videos, or interactive features. Portable display boards are often effective for use at events or workshops.

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- **Promotional Items** – Promotional giveaways such as magnets, pencils and bumper stickers, can be imprinted with water conservation messages and tips and distributed at community events, schools and workshops.

REGIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Over the years, the Metro Water District has developed a comprehensive education and public awareness program that includes all the elements outlined in this section. A regional education and public awareness plan has many benefits including reducing duplication of efforts, improving cost effectiveness among groups by sharing costs, and expanding the size and scale of education efforts to include mass media such as television and radio advertising.

The Metro Water District developed a regional water conservation education and public awareness program to help local governments educate their communities about the importance of conserving water. The regional water conservation campaign includes brochures, videos, how-to-manual and promotional items. The Metro Water District adopted Water Use It Wisely, a nationally known water conservation public education campaign recognized for their indoor and outdoor water conservation tips.

Shortly after adopting Water Use It Wisely, the Metro Water District began its water conservation media campaign. The media campaign included television, radio, outdoor and movie theatre advertising. Water Use It Wisely messages were placed on local television and radio stations, billboard, bus stations and in movie theatres throughout the Metro Water District. The Metro Water District has partnered with local television stations to air Water Use It Wisely and partnering station public service announcements (PSAs). The radio water conservation PSAs were aired on radio stations across the region during peak times such as morning and evening rush hours.

As part of the regional education campaign, the Metro Water District provides an essay contest for middle school students throughout the Metro Water District. The essay contest encourages middle school students within the district, to write essays on water quality and water conservation. The Metro Water District recognizes one winner from each county and one overall winner. This regional essay contest helps local governments reach out to students and teachers who would normally not be able to because of budget and staff constraints.

Moving forward to the next five years, the Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan will continue to promote water conservation messages. New messages have been identified that the Metro Water District can promote including helping the community understand typical water use, outdoor water use is consumptive and should be minimized, “water wasting” should be avoided and new homes and green buildings should be water efficient. In support of these messages and to enhance current efforts, the Metro Water District should consider the following:

- Research Homeowner Association watering and irrigation requirements and, if feasible, develop a strategy to address required irrigation system and watering.
- Develop a model “water waste” ordinance.
- Promote water efficiency aspects of green building.
- Assist with development of a new home efficiency award program.
- Sponsor an annual awards program for water saving businesses.

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- Offer cooling tower education and training.
- Add additional emphasis to outdoor watering education including developing educational materials on rainwater harvesting and efficient water use for pools, spas, pressure washing and non-commercial car washing.
- Provide education on energy and water savings possible through implementing water conservation practices.

The Metro Water District provides a number of educational resources for local governments to use in order to facilitate and manage their local education campaign. Table 12-2 is a list of educational resources provided by the Metro Water District. Each item gives a brief description on how local governments can use these tools to meet education requirements.

TABLE 12-2

Educational Materials Available to Local Governments by the Metro Water District

Educational Tools	Description
Brochures	The Metro Water District provides camera ready brochures for local governments to personalize with their own logo and contact information. A list of the available brochures and educational items can be found in the appendix of this plan.
CD/DVD	The Metro Water District provides a number of educational materials such as PowerPoint presentations, videos and public service announcements.
Presentations	The Metro Water District provides pre-packaged presentations with speaker's notes on a variety of topics such as household water audits, checking for leaks and building rain gardens.
Metro Water District Website	The Metro Water District website provides downloadable resources such as brochures, how-to-booklets, news articles and water conservation related reports and documents.
Exhibits	The Metro Water District has a mobile exhibit board and "water drop" costume available to loan to local governments for community events. The mobile exhibit board has facts and tips on water pollution prevention. Local governments can also customize the exhibit board with local information.
Press Materials	The Metro Water District provides templates for press releases, news articles, flyers and newsletter inserts to distribute to local and regional media outlets.

All components of the education and public awareness program are important for an effective education and public awareness program. The Metro Water District will continue to provide support to local government through its regional education and public awareness program.

LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The goal of local education programs is to achieve awareness of water supply and conservation issues with the goal of building public support for local actions and activities as well as changing behaviors that leads to the long-term protection of our water resources. Involving the public in local water supply and water conservation efforts is crucial because it promotes broader public support, helps create an ethic of stewardship and community service, and enables the public to make informed choices about water resources management. Changes in basic behavior and practices are necessary to achieve maximum, long-term improvements in water efficiency.

On a local level, Metro Water District communities are responsible for developing their own local education and public awareness programs that help both individual citizens as well as business and organizations to become aware of their role in water efficiency. This includes general information on water supply and water conservation management and issues.

LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

When developing a local education and public awareness program, communities are required to include both public education and outreach, as well as public involvement and participation activities:

- **Education and outreach program activities** are designed to distribute education materials and messages, and perform outreach to inform citizens and target audiences.
- **Public participation and involvement activities** provide opportunities for citizens to participate in programs and active implementation of water supply and water conservation programs, such as water festivals and community workshops.

Water providers in the Metro Water District are required to annually implement a minimum number of education and outreach, and public participation and involvement activities annually as part of their local education program as shown in Table 12-3. Table 12-4 provides some examples of activities that could be considered as public education and outreach versus public participation and involvement. These minimum education and outreach programs may be in coordination with other Metro Water District communities, local water/wastewater providers, or other public or private entities such as Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates.

TABLE 12-3

Minimum Local Education and Public Awareness Program Annual Requirements

Population Served	Education and Outreach Activities	Public Participation and Involvement Activities
<50,000	2	2
>50,000	3	3

TABLE 12-4

Example Water Supply and Water Conservation Education / Outreach and Public Participation / Involvement Activities

Education and Outreach Activities	Public Participation and Involvement Activities
Bill stuffers or newsletters	Water treatment facility tours
Brochures at municipal facilities	Citizen advisory group
Website with water conservation information	Water festivals
Local Cable or Government TV station programming	School classroom education
Speakers bureau presentations	Technical training to target audiences
Press releases	Retrofit kit distribution
Provide historical water use on water bills	Essay contests
Adopt a water waste ordinance and enforcement	Coloring book contest
Xeriscape demonstration garden	Community workshops
Promote toilet rebate program	Interactive kiosks / exhibits
Other innovative education and outreach activities	Other innovative public participation and involvement activities

EXAMPLE DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITIES

Example Education and Outreach Activities:

- **Provide historical water use on water bills.** Historical use on water bills provides a great opportunity to educate all water system customers. A water system could provide detailed information on customer’s historical water use, including typical usage and trends.
- **Water waste ordinance.** An ordinance would provide a general policy statement for a local government that would prohibit water waste while also educating all water users on water wasting. Water wasting includes runoff from over-watering landscaping, irrigation during rainfall events, not repairing leaks, and other wasteful activities.
- **Xeriscape demonstration gardens.** A water system may donate or acquire a portion of public or private land to create a demonstration garden displaying living examples of low water-using gardens and landscaping. The water system would provide signs and brochures to educate those people visiting the garden.

Example Public Participation and Involvement Activities:

- **Facility tours at treatment plant.** Some local water service providers have tours available at their facilities. Tours can be arranged for school trips or other audiences. Informational materials such as brochures and fact sheets can be available for distribution at participating facilities.

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- **School education.** School education can be an opportunity to educate students, teachers and/ or parents on water efficiency and may include a wide variety of outreach activities. The water system could sponsor school conservation by providing presentations, opportunities for field trips, and/or coloring books, etc. to teach students the importance of conserving water.
- **Community workshops.** Local water systems can offer training classes to homeowners on a variety of water efficiency topics. For instance, a water system may coordinate with the Cooperative Extension Service to conduct a landscape water efficiency training program for homeowners in the spring of each year. Topics for water efficiency workshops may include how to be a water wise household, finding and fixing leaks, making a rain barrel, Xeriscaping and proper irrigation watering and maintenance. Workshops may be held for interested existing groups and organizations during their regularly scheduled meetings.

TABLE 12-5
Water Supply and Water Conservation Education and Public Awareness Resources

Public Outreach Toolbox	
Program	Program Description/Resource Location
Metro Water District Programs	
Regional Outreach Tools	Various water conservation resources for outreach and events. http://www.northgeorgiawater.com
Conservation Support	Various websites to assist with water conservation program. http://www.northgeorgiawater.com
Water Use it Wisely	Various resources for outreach. http://www.wateruseitwisely.com
Georgia EPD Programs	
Conserve Water Georgia	Water Conservation and Watering Restrictions http://www.conservewatergeorgia.net
Georgia Project Wet	Water Education Resources for Teachers http://gaprojectwet.org
Adopt-a-Stream	Volunteer Water Sampling and Monitoring Program http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org
River of Words	Poetry, Writing and Art program for K-12 http://gaprojectwet.org/
Rivers Alive	Annual Volunteer Waterway Cleanup http://www.riversalive.com/
Other Public Education Resources	
EPA Water Sense	Various resources for outreach. http://www.epa.gov/watersense
Georgia DCA	“Winning Water” Water Festival http://www.winningwater.org