

Santa Barbara County Strategic Communications and Marketing Strategy for a Water Conservation Education Campaign

Current Situation

Santa Barbara County works collaboratively with a network of water providers including the Santa Barbara County Water Agency, cities that provide water within the County, as well as water districts and community service districts to provide water related communications and educate the public on water resources, conservation, and awareness. Each water purveyor, however; plays a distinct role in communicating potential conservation measures and providing information to their ratepayers regarding their individual water supply status and any district specific conservation measures.

On January 17, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown proclaimed a State of Emergency and directed local officials to take action to prepare for drought conditions. The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors joined the State by proclaiming a local drought emergency and similarly called for residents to take an immediate voluntary 20% reduction in water use.

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues, increase the profile of existing water conservation messages, and communicate the call for a 20% voluntary reduction in water usage, the County has developed a strategic communications plan. The plan complements and bolsters the existing network communications currently provided via Water Wise in Santa Barbara County (Water Wise SB).

Key components of the strategic communications plan, include, but not limited to, a significantly enhanced use of County of Santa Barbara Television production capabilities, all social media platforms, and the Water Wise SB website to:

- Refresh messages and increase awareness and interest in water conservation within the County.
- Reaffirm water conservation messages for residential (indoor and landscape) and business.
- Create a more visible presence and renewed interest in Water Wise SB in the County.
- Explain the current water supply situation and the meaning of a drought.
- Provide specific messages regarding the drought and impacts to public safety, air quality, and agriculture within Santa Barbara County.
- Promote the need for conservation practices and benefits.
- Ensure all messages are provided in Spanish and English.

Initial Steps

Recent public opinion polling at the state level indicates that customers have a relatively high level of awareness about the drought and water supply problem issues. However, the public does not feel a sense of urgency about doing things now to help create a reliable long-term water supply. In addition,

the public has not been engaged in a comprehensive education program or debate about what the potential options are for a long-term water supply solution. This means focusing the initial public education campaign on helping the public understand the water supply issue, the need for conservation (initial 20% voluntary reduction in residential users) is most appropriate. The concept of a water conservation program does not reflect the reality of how people use water or how purveyors manage demand. Therefore, conservation communications are not a single initiative but a portfolio of often interrelated but potentially independently operated programs targeting specific behaviors and market segments.

Communications Landscape

There are several factors impacting the implementation of a strategic communications program. As noted, each water purveyor, as a separate legal entity or special purpose district, plays a distinct role in communicating specific messages and provides information to their ratepayers regarding their individual water supply status and any district specific conservation measures.

The County of Santa Barbara, through the County Water Agency serves a unique role in water supply issues. The Water Agency is not a direct purveyor of water or a wholesaler. The Agency serves as the Contracting entity with the Federal Government for the Cachuma and Twitchell Projects, and the County Flood Control District acts in the same capacity for the State Water Project. In these roles, the County collects and analyzes hydrologic data through the County. The County conducts technical studies, planning studies and provides this information to the water purveyors and the general public. The County records and maintains rainfall data, some sites dating back almost one hundred fifty years. The County also predicts reservoir data such as available supplies, projected inflow, flood flow forecasting, and statistical analysis and specifically provides information on supply status to the purveyors.

A key goal of this particular campaign as led by the County will be to remind residents county wide of the importance of the water supply, where it comes from, how it is distributed and remind them that it is not an unlimited resource. Secondly, through the voluntary 20% reduction in water usage, individuals can play an immediate and tangible role and extend our water supply.

The average customer is bombarded with communications messages regarding the drought throughout the day from local, regional, and national media resources. Therefore, the communications landscape in general is extremely cluttered. A successful campaign must contain elements that are able to reach the consumer on a personal level with memorable message and clear call to action. The strategies presented in this plan have been developed with this environment in mind.

This communications plan supports the Board of Supervisors direction in the area of conservation in two ways: one, it emphasizes voluntary conservation as a primary message, and two, it is flexible and can be modified to reflect the conservation program as the situation evolves at both a state and local level.

Step 1: Identify the goal of the campaign

The State of California and the County of Santa Barbara have identified a goal of an immediate voluntarily 20% reduction in water in order to preserve water supply and extend the life of the current resource.

Individual water purveyors may choose to implement district specific activities in addition to or as differentiated from the overall voluntary call to action of a 20% reduction in residential water usage. The initial goals of the communications strategy includes:

- Refreshing and draw renewed sense of interest to current unified communication, education, policy and planning, and programs (Water Wise SB).
- Creating increased visibility, credibility, and presence to the Water Wise SB efforts.
- Targeting various audiences with specific messages.
- Marketing the Countywide water conservation programs and spotlighting new tools.
- Promoting the 40 gallon challenge call to action to help residents reach the 20% voluntary reduction.

County specific messages and messaging efforts such as those stated below are planned:

- What do Santa Barbara County residents need to know about their water supply?
- How does Santa Barbara County get its water?
 - How does it differ among providers?
- The impact of the drought on Santa Barbara quality of life.
- How the Drought Impacts You!
- How does drought impact_____ (economy, agriculture, recreation, public safety, air quality)?
- Daily Water Conservation Tips! (all sectors)
- Take the 40 gallon challenge!

Step 2: Identify the target sector and population

The State and County have specifically referred to residential users for the 20% voluntary reduction. The campaign will strive to engage different populations for example adults and children. Children are more likely to respond to fun ways to conserve water through games, while adults are more responsive to calculators and challenges that show them direct savings achieved by taking specific actions. While residential users are the initial target of the state, the County will continue to provide enhanced messaging around conservation tips for both residential and commercial use and refresh all messaging on Water WISE SB which provides information on conservation for all sectors. All messaging will be provided in Spanish and English.

Step 3: Establish the brand, messages, and logo

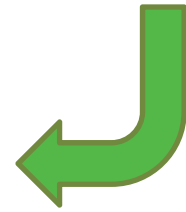
How you say something makes all the difference? Key messages are the core of a campaign – they communicate what you want your audience to hear and remember. Carefully crafted messages provide communication, direction, and purpose; and enhance the relationship with the audience, supporting the overall goals of 20% voluntary conservation.

There are three essential components of an effective campaign: Brand, messages, and a logo.



A brand is the umbrella identity of a product or service, while the messages create the structure for that umbrella. A logo is the face of the brand, visually representing the message or messages that it is communicating. The County is determining how to establish a refreshed brand of the 20% voluntary conservation campaign while leveraging as many existing resources as possible, such as existing campaigns and projects that have been successful countywide. Crafting flexible messages to reach the population and developing a logo to visually represent the brand are important. Typically, these elements make up a brand:

- Name, the title that identifies the County campaign and concept
- Logo, is the visual representation of the brand
- Tagline, Let's Save Together . . . Key word **Together** spotlighted through multiple facets of campaign.



Messaging

One component of a successful brand is flexible messaging that will resonate with people motivated by different factors. While some may respond well to facts and figures about the pros and cons of water conservation, others may respond better to images of what they can do to make a difference. The water conservation message(s) are crafted in a number of ways to try to reach different audience types.

Flexible water conservation messages are developed to address different motivators for residents to take action. The County via WATER WISE SB and the efforts of CSBTV has created messages that focus on the current state of the water supply to Santa Barbara County as a whole, the health of the environment, what individuals can gain by conservation, the threat of wildfires as a result of the drought, air quality impacts due to the drought etc.

The County will combine messages of well-being and natural resource conservation with the need to take personal responsibility yet work together and conserve.

The following four types of motivators are a starting place for the County and partners to craft flexible, effective messages for a 20% voluntary reduction campaign:

1. **Why water conservation is necessary for the County? Why now?**

Expressing the need for water conservation given the current water supply in Santa Barbara County will likely resonate more with individuals who are motivated to take action because it's the right thing to do and there is general awareness of the severity of the situation throughout the state given extensive coverage in print media and local region and national news outlets.

Example message:

We Are All in this Together . . . Water is integral to the well-being of humans, pets, the ecosystem, and economic activity.

The County will use a combination of taglines and facts as part of its messaging. Possible Tagline . . .

“Use Only What You Need, We Are All in this Together”

This message will remind residents of the importance of water conservation on a day-to-day basis and will resonate with members of the community that understand the value of sufficiency and a concern for the well-being of the community and local environment as a whole.

Taglines and images can communicate the message(s) in a campaign. Denver Water’s “Use Only What You Need” Campaign, created a variety of images that can be placed and recognized anywhere because of their simplicity and consistency to the overall brand of the campaign. The County is presently working to develop this component of the outreach and education campaign.



EXAMPLE: Denver Water’s USE LESS WATER campaign materials:

Denver Water’s water conservation campaign was designed to address day-to-day water conservation as well as water conservation during times of drought or crisis. The logo identifies the provider (Denver Water), the product (water), and the message (reduce water use). The County is exploring similar approaches to refresh messages and tailor to drought situation and conservation message.

This campaign is powerful because it:

- Is playful.
- Uses messages that will resonate with the range of individual priorities (e.g., the bigger picture, financial savings and reduced risk).
- Uses images to make individuals think about how much water they really need vs. what they use.
- The consistent layout, orange background, white and black text, and bold print make all campaign materials clearly from Denver Water and about water conservation.

- The advertisements are delivered in different modes: on buses, in print, in installations, on bus stops, on billboards capturing the attention of both drivers and those who take mass transit
- The County can benefit from participating in a well-branded, existing water conservation program that has the following components:
 - Flexible – it can be modified without losing the campaign integrity to fit changing needs and can be delivered in a variety of ways to appeal to several audiences
 - Simple and easy to interpret – not complicated in design or appearance
 - Consistent – messages are consistent with one another and feel connected to the overall intent of the campaign
 - Easy to identify – when someone hears the tagline or message or sees the logo or a billboard, they will know it is connected to the campaign

2. Individual benefits of water conservation

Expressing the benefits of water conservation will likely resonate more with individuals who are motivated to take action once they understand how they can benefit from water conservation. The County will use taglines to convey the connection between water conservation and a benefit, such as “Drops to Watts: Save Water, Save Energy.” The County is presently exploring the potential of partnering with EMPOWER SB leveraging the link between water and energy savings.

3. The risks or consequences of not conserving water

Messages that communicate the risks or consequences of not conserving water can be developed for individuals who are motivated to take action once they understand what is at stake if no action is taken. A local government can communicate this risk or consequence by talking about something that is close to people, as an example, recreation. By connecting the need for water conservation to potential seasonal loss of recreational areas like lakes, the issue becomes something that personally affects residents who use our water bodies for boating and other activities. This takes the message beyond what is normally discussed to get the attention of individuals that may be uniquely impacted by this message:

Water supply levels – before and after drought conditions in Lake Cachuma.



4. What can be done to achieve water conservation goals?

Expressing what can be done to achieve water conservation goals will likely resonate more with individuals who are motivated to take action once they understand how their own specific actions can make a difference. Examples of actions that residents can take to reduce water use are provided below. The County may use these tips, and others, to show residents how they can reduce water use. For example, the WATER WISE SB Website contains “water conservation at home” tip sheet that has the following message:

Fix Faucet Leaks - - Don't Let All That Clean Water Drip Away.

Each individual conservation tip or messages will be tagged and tweeted and transmitted via social media and ongoing CSBTV Public service announcements

Residential sector water saving tips

There are a range of water-saving actions the County can recommend to residents, including:

Indoor

- Fix leaky pipes and products
- Reduce shower time
- Eliminate unnecessary water use when brushing teeth or washing dishes
- Wash clothes and dishes only when loads are full

Outdoor (landscaping and irrigation)

- Group plants according to their water needs
- Know how much water each plant needs to stay healthy
- Fix leaky hoses and equipment
- Aerate the soil
- Raise the lawn mower cutting height

Product Selection

- Buy products branded with the WaterSense label
(i.e., toilets, bathroom sink faucets, showerheads, weather-based irrigation controllers)

Additional resources:

www.waterwisesb.org

- Indoor water saving tips: Website
- Landscaping tips: Website
- Watering wisely: Website
- Water-saving technologies: Website

Step 4: Identify communication methods

It is important to use a combination of methods to communicate the campaign because it increases the opportunities that messages will reach the intended audience(s). Connecting existing outreach techniques will save time and resources and enhance the success of the water conservation campaign. There are a variety of communication techniques that the County and its partners already use to promote the campaign. Below is a summary of a variety of communications methods at the County and partner's disposal. Tracking how the community responds to various methods will also be important to modify the overall campaign strategy moving forward (see Step 7).

Communication Methods

Direct mailings

- Leverage existing direct mailings to residential households by including water conservation tips to residential customers (purveyors)
- Include seasonal water conservation tips

WATER WISE SB website

- Create a subcomponent of the webpage specific the drought and water supply/water conservation countywide
- Add a banner to the County's homepage and Water Wise SB webpage with rotating water conservation tips

Social media

- Social media will be fully leveraged.
- Facebook (www.facebook.com/countyofsb) and Twitter (@countyofsb) are used daily to share links to digital media.
- To date, Twitter and Facebook have been used to provide links to all drought management press releases, current photos of Lake Cachuma, rain forecasts, and current reservoir levels.
- Flickr (www.flickr.com/countyofsb) is used as needed to share photos of county infrastructure, water resources, and resource levels.
- County Flickr page includes photos from January and February of 2014.
- YouTube (www.youtube.com/csbtv20) is used as needed to share water resource educational videos, b-roll, and press conferences.
- Series of six short videos addressing Santa Barbara County water resources and conservation efforts. Titles include "Maintaining Water in Santa Barbara County", "Water Sources", "Where Do We Get Our Water", "2014 California Drought", "Water Conservation Inside the Home", and "Water Conservation Outside the Home."
- B-roll of the boat dock, junction point drive-by for pumps and power, Bradbury Dam, and the Tecolote Tunnel Intakes.

Face to Face

- Deliver water conservation presentations at strategic partners' events such as community meetings and workshops, and incorporate the four key messages addressed in Step 3 of this document
- Have water conservation booths at community events

Print

- Create a water conservation series (spring summer winter fall specialized conservation messaging)
- Create an op-ed series. "State of the Water" is an op-ed piece where the County as a Water Agency reports on the state of the water system, sources uses, and water conservation tips

- And/or invite residents to submit Op-eds with what they are doing to conserve water
- Create a Twelve Months of Water campaign as an example of residents submitting testimonials about water conservation: (replicate on Web and SM)
- Brief elected officials about water conservation in water conservation. In one-on-one or small group meetings, educate and encourage all elected officials to help spread the water conservation message(s) to their constituents (up to date fact sheets).

Media

Over 60 media outlets serve the residents and business of Santa Barbara County. Therefore, the media relations and media advocacy program will target different messages targeting key county audiences.

- Place advertisements in the local newspapers as well as cable and radio stations. Make extensive use of CSBTV capabilities with refreshed video messaging.
- **How Do We Get Our Water? 26 Seconds** <http://youtu.be/gxCR7JvH-UA>
- **Water Sources: 2 minutes 21 Seconds** <http://youtu.be/PeoX8wKMhxo>
- **Maintaining Water in Santa Barbara County: 2 Minutes 8 Seconds** <http://youtu.be/a5u3y-qxeAU>
- **Water Conservation Outside the Home: 1 minute 31 seconds** <http://youtu.be/X7qrvYe9qeY>
- **What is a Drought? 1 minute 31 seconds.** <http://youtu.be/FfSzf9iqJSk>
- **Indoor Water Conservation: 1 minute 47 seconds** <http://youtu.be/E8d4G8qkvV>
- Due to the cost of advertising, the County will consolidate advertisements to a specific timeframe for the biggest impact (e.g., during Earth Week, Water Conservation Month) (No funding is requested at this time)

Step 5: Work with key stakeholders and strategic partners

The County will continue to work closely with the existing water provider network and additional local partners to build and deliver a successful water conservation campaign. Local environmental groups, schools and higher education institutions, media outlets, and others can provide a wealth of knowledge, resources, and implementation capacity to assist the County in creating a successful campaign.

Strategic partners may include:

- Neighborhood Associations
- Local environmental organizations
- Civic and faith-based organizations
- Local news outlets

Educational institutions

- Student groups
- Institutions of higher education

Elected Officials

- Educate and ask elected officials to talk about the value of water and water conservation in verbal and written communications.

Step 6: Leverage existing programs and resources

The County doesn't have to start from scratch in developing messages, tips, marketing materials, and challenges to motivate residents to take action. There are many successful programs that have already developed these tools and resources. A goal of the communications strategy is to maximize yet update materials that it feels will resonate with residents.

The following examples are successful, comprehensive programs that the County and partners can reference as the water conservation campaign is being fully developed.

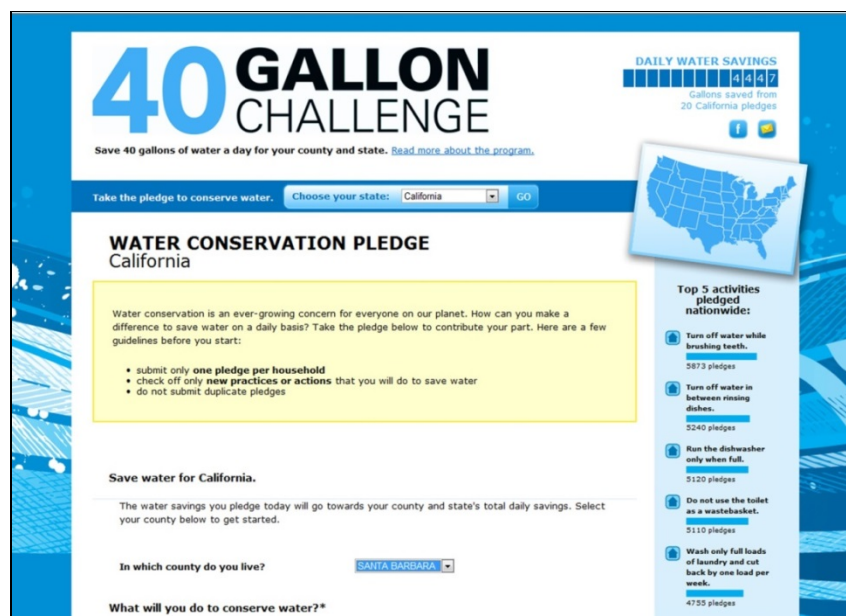


Water Wise SB is a well-branded and highly successful water conservation program administered by the Santa Barbara County Water Agency.

New Tools in the Tool Box

40 Gallon Challenge

The 40 Gallon Challenge is a national program that started in 2011. It is a voluntary pledge that individuals or organizations can take to reduce water use through any number of water conservation actions. The Challenge provides a framework that the County and partners will easily tap into by simply promoting the pledge to residents and tracking participation on a countywide level. This model will resonate well with individuals motivated by understanding what actions they can take to reduce water use. The following is a snapshot of the pledge page:



Benefits of the Challenge are that it is web-based, has traction nationwide so that participants can see how their individual impact plays a role in the larger state and national effort to conserve water, and the program has a number of marketing materials and resources that can be used, including public service announcements and social media interfaces.

More information about the 40 Gallon Challenge is available, here:

<http://www.40gallonchallenge.org/about.cfm>

Step 7: Obtain feedback and report on progress

Soliciting feedback and tracking progress will be essential for determining the success of this campaign.

In addition, it will be helpful for making adjustments for future iterations of the countywide water conservation efforts. The metrics typically used depend heavily on program design.

Typically metrics include:

- Reduction of water use per capita
- Number or percent of residential households participating in a program
- Estimated gallons of water saved

Depending on staff capacity and resources, the County may also obtain feedback from residents through the web, email. The County can also benefit by conducting formal marketing research in the future with the help of a third party such as a university or local non-profit. However, the results are collected, the feedback the County receives will confirm if the is effective or provides helpful insight into how it can be modified.

Summary and Next Steps

There are several key steps for the County of Santa Barbara to develop and implement a water conservation education campaign. With the assistance of WATER WISE SB network partners, the County Water Agency and the County Executive Office will be integral to creating and implementing a successful program, the County is presently working to take these steps to create a comprehensive water conservation campaign:

- 1) Identify the goal of the campaign
- 2) Identify the target sector(s) and population
- 3) Establish the brand, messages, and logo
- 4) Identify communications methods
- 5) Work with key stakeholders and strategic partners
- 6) Leverage existing programs and resources
- 7) Obtain feedback, and report on progress

The County has taken an important step by identifying the need to develop a water conservation education campaign. Simple, flexible messages delivered through a variety of methods and developed through collaborative partnerships will help to ensure that campaign successfully achieves the voluntary water conservation goals.

Additional water conservation resources

- American Water Works Association Sample Utility Communications Plan:
<http://www.awwa.org/resources-tools/public-affairs/communications-tools/public-communications-toolkit/sample-utility-communications-plan.aspx>
- 40 Gallon Challenge website: <http://www.40gallonchallenge.org/>
- National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation:
<http://www.wylandfoundation.org/mywaterpledge/>

WATER Wise SB

- www.waterwisesb.org