

SAVING WATER PARTNERSHIP

2020 Annual Report



**SAVING WATER
PARTNERSHIP**
Make a difference. Use water wisely.

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The South Fork Tolt River watershed is one of two mountain watersheds that provide drinking water for 1.5 million people.

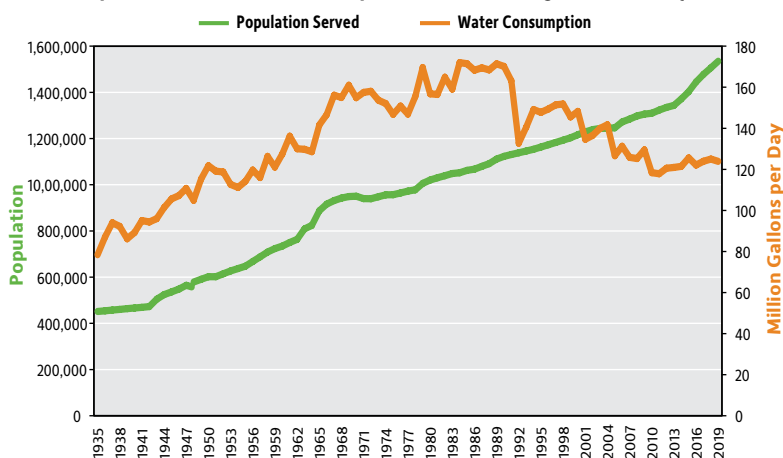
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Saving Water Partnership offers tips, tools, and rebates to help people preserve our region's water for future generations.

The Saving Water Partnership (SWP) is an organization comprised of 18 water utilities in King and Snohomish counties that share a common water supply. Our water conservation program offers a mix of education, technical assistance, and rebates to encourage residents and businesses to take actions that save water. We emphasize youth education and community outreach because we value a conservation ethic. A shared conservation ethic is especially important in the face of significant regional population growth.

Members of the Saving Water Partnership have been committed to conserving water since the 1980s. The conservation program is a key factor in the steady decline of water consumption since 1990, despite population growth. Other factors in the decline include improving water system operations, setting rate structures that encourage the wise use of water, and adopting building codes and appliance standards that make efficient plumbing fixtures and appliances the norm. The Seattle area now uses about as much water as it did in the late 1950s, when the population was half of what it is today.

Population and Water Consumption for Seattle Regional Water System



Note: This graph shows data for the entire Seattle Regional Water System, which includes several wholesale water utilities that are **not** part of the Saving Water Partnership (SWP). Therefore, the SWP numbers are lower.

Our region has reduced its water use dramatically since 1990.

Saving Water Partnership Service Area



Saving Water Partnership Members

Cedar River Water & Sewer District
City of Bothell
City of Duvall
City of Mercer Island
City of Renton
Coal Creek Utility District
Highline Water District
North City Water District
Northshore Utility District
Olympic View Water & Sewer District
Seattle Public Utilities
Soos Creek Water & Sewer District
Water District Number 20
Water District Number 49
Water District Number 90
Water District Number 119
Water District Number 125
Woodinville Water District

WATER USE EFFICIENCY GOAL AND 2020 RESULTS

The Saving Water Partnership adopted a ten-year regional Water Use Efficiency Goal for the period 2019-2028: keep the total average annual retail water use of SWP members under 110 mgd through 2028, despite forecasted population growth, by reducing per capita water use.

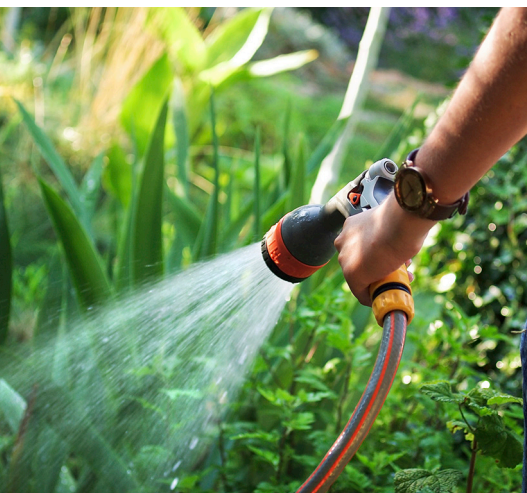
In 2020, with the support of residential and commercial customers, we met the goal, using 91.2 mgd. Implementing our water conservation program cost \$1.2 million in 2020.

Water use efficiency goals are required by the State of Washington Municipal Water Law (RCW 70.119A.180) and the resulting Water Use Efficiency Rule (Chapter 246-290-800 WAC). The Saving Water Partnership regional goal is set by the Seattle Regional Water Supply System Operating Board and adopted by each SWP member utility.

How do We Achieve the Goal?

We achieve the goal by customers choosing to change their behavior and/or install efficient equipment. Customers engage in these efficiency measures for a variety of reasons, including concern for future generations, concern for the environment, desire to save money, and desire to make a difference. Water savings fall into three categories:

- **Conservation Program:** Savings that result from our program. With respect to equipment, our program promotes equipment that is more efficient than federal or state codes or standards require, as well as equipment not covered by codes or standards.
- **Codes and Standards:** Savings that occur as customers replace older, less-efficient fixtures with new, more-efficient models that meet federal or state codes or standards. These savings are also achieved as new buildings are constructed using efficient code-compliant equipment.
- **Independent:** Savings that result from customers who make efficient choices, independent of our program or codes and standards.



COVID-19 Impacts & Innovations

The COVID-19 pandemic turned our lives upside-down. Many customers struggled with new demands placed on their families, homes, and finances. Conservation program staff shifted to working from home. Face-to-face outreach at schools, community festivals, and customer service counters was not possible.

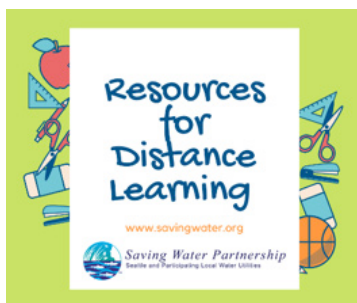
In response, we adapted! Many of the changes we made to our programs will continue to benefit customers beyond 2020, including the following:

- Improved online applications for rebates and services.
- Retooled youth education classes and gardening classes so they could be offered virtually.
- Developed new virtual offerings to replace traditionally in-person technical assistance services for businesses and large landscapes.

Learn more in the sections below.

Youth Education

- The youth education program continues to be popular with teachers and students. In 2020 we conducted 348 in-classroom and remote presentations, in 14 member service areas, for more than 7,600 K-8 grade students. Despite the pandemic, we were able to provide 70% of the planned number of programs by retooling. In order to continue serving schools that were meeting virtually due to COVID-19, we retooled our offerings to include programs that could be taught remotely. Topics included water supply, the water cycle, and the salmon life cycle.
- We added a Resources for Distance Learning section on the Saving Water Partnership website to help support teachers, parents, and students who are learning from home. The section features home-friendly activities.



Promotional materials to spread the word about new distance learning content on our website were shared with members.



Keep Washing and Keep Conserving - We updated messaging to promote conservation within the context of the pandemic.



Social media ad marketing the pivot to virtual school programs.



Youth education programs were recorded so students could participate remotely and asynchronously.

Community Outreach

- To protect public health, most community events were canceled. However, the City of Seattle held 2 Home Fairs in January and February, and the City of Bothell held a virtual Scavenger Hunt from August 2-8 that drew 60 participants. The Scavenger Hunt included “missions” focused on indoor and outdoor water conservation. Bothell plans to expand on this idea for their virtual Sustainamania event in 2021.
- Our website, www.savingwater.org, continued to be a key resource for customers to learn ways to reduce their water use.
- We actively sponsored and promoted King County/WRIA 8’s Salmon SEEson program. Salmon SEEson helps the public view salmon returning to local streams to spawn, and provides steps to protect salmon, including ways to conserve water. 2020 featured self-guided visits to spawning sites instead of community viewing events, and promoted a new interactive website that included underwater footage.
- In 2020 we concluded work with a research consultant to better understand how to educate and motivate our residential customers to value water conservation, improve leak detection and resolution, irrigate efficiently, and choose efficient fixtures. Through this process, the Saving Water Partnership collected feedback and insights from 1,315 homeowners, renters, and property managers from across our service area. We conducted interviews and focus groups in English, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese. As a result of the research, we updated our brand, including a new logo, and are updating our materials and programs.
- We experimented with reaching our customers through several Instagram Live sessions on topics such as making showers efficient. The sessions were recorded and posted to our website and our YouTube channel for viewing anytime.
- We created seasonal marketing kits to help Saving Water Partnership members communicate with their customers about water conservation. 2020 topics included taking steps to lower your water bill, installing faucet aerators, fixing leaks, saving water helps salmon, and tips for saving water in your yard.



The City of Bothell virtual Scavenger Hunt included a fun activity for teams to learn about watersheds.



Salmon SEEson campaign materials were promoted to SWP members.



Saving Water Partnership
Seattle and Participating Local Water Utilities



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We updated our logo and tagline based on what we learned from our customer research.

Single & Multifamily Indoor Programs

- We continued to promote 1.1 gallons per flush (gpf) Premium toilets for residential customers. The most efficient toilets available on the market, these toilets use at least 20% less water than WaterSense toilets. 435 toilets were upgraded in 344 homes. We developed new web resources to enable customers to tell if their toilet qualifies for a rebate. We also moved to online application forms and evaluated new rebate software for use in future years.
- The Multifamily Toilet Rebate program continued a trend of declining participation, accelerated by COVID-19 and a reluctance of owners to go into units to perform fixture upgrades. Five apartment and condominium buildings upgraded 88 toilets to Premium models. Two projects in the City of Renton accounted for most of the fixtures replaced this year. In response to COVID-19, we eliminated in-person inspections from our application procedures.
- We piloted an outreach strategy targeting multifamily properties that were very likely eligible for the program. We contacted 56 multifamily properties by phone, visit, and email to promote the rebate program. This approach yielded 2 applications for the program. Based on these results we planned a second pilot outreach strategy that will emphasize leak education in addition to the rebate program. This strategy will be tested in 2021.
- We developed materials to help multifamily building owners, property managers, and condominium owners encourage residents to notice leaks and fix or report leaks.

Commercial Indoor Programs

- Three businesses took part in water use assessments, which are detailed walk-throughs of the customer's sites to identify water savings opportunities. Some of these resulted in rebate projects this year, while others resulted in operational changes and/or future rebate projects.
- Six businesses contacted us to work with them to develop custom rebates for specific water-using equipment. By definition, these rebates are non-standard and often require specialized knowledge and analysis due to the equipment types such as boilers, cooling towers, and commercial laundry systems. Some of this work resulted in rebate projects this year, and some of it will result in projects next year.



Social media ad for toilet rebates.



New posters were developed for multifamily buildings. These will be distributed in 2021.



SWP and Darigold, Inc. staff inspect a facility in preparation for a water-saving equipment upgrade.

- Water efficiency rebate projects were completed at 6 businesses, replacing a total of 80 fixtures.
- We developed processes and materials to conduct our water use assessments virtually, due to the pandemic. We also improved our water use assessment reports to produce them more efficiently and make them more effective with customers.
- We worked with the Building Operators Certification program to incorporate detailed water efficiency curriculum into their courses for facility operators and managers, which historically focused primarily on energy efficiency.
- We developed two water conservation kits for businesses to help them find and fix leaks.
- We developed a leak reporting placard to help businesses engage their employees, customers, and tenants in reporting leaks.
- We laid the groundwork for a partnership with the Northwest Energy Efficiency Council to allow us to market our conservation programs to their extensive network of building professionals.
- We continued to strengthen relationships with utility partners including Puget Sound Energy, Seattle City Light, and Tacoma Water as we collaborated on the Commercial Food Service regional rebate program.



This ad promoted new virtual technical assistance services to commercial customers.



The SWP marketed water conservation to businesses via video at the 2020 GoGreen Conference. The presentation topic was "How Sustainability Intersects with Equity."



We designed this new leak reporting placard for businesses.



We provided this information card in the new business conservation kit.

- We engaged with many organizations to promote our commercial programs and highlight the importance of water efficiency, including South Seattle College Sustainable Building Science Technology program, Seattle 2030 District, Seattle Good Business Network, American Society of Plumbing Engineers, and the Puget Sound Hotel Engineers Association.

Landscape Programs

- The Savvy Gardener program presented 9 gardening classes - 2 held in-person and 7 webinars – hosted by the City of Renton, North City Water District, and King County Water District 90, in spring, summer, and fall. 243 residential customers attended, and 99 of those were new to the Savvy Gardener classes. Survey results from class participants show that of the 26 respondents, 19 started 53 new practices that are expected to reduce water use in the landscape. The classes were designed to inspire, create, and maintain healthy, sustainable, water-efficient landscapes.
- We put our trainings to educate landscape professionals about irrigation topics on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- Our irrigation timer rebate program upgraded 50 inefficient timers to WaterSense-labeled timers. The program offers \$10 per zone, up to a \$100 total rebate. 60% of the participants live in the Saving Water Partnership service areas outside of Seattle. We surveyed 2019 participants and found that 96% of the 75 respondents were satisfied with the timer they chose. 57% reported a decrease in water use.
- Custom irrigation system rebate projects were completed at 2 apartment complexes with large landscapes.
- We converted our landscape water use assessments from in-person to virtual to be able to continue offering them during the pandemic.



We promoted the new virtual landscape assessments on social media.



Ad marketing one of the Savvy Gardener classes.



We promoted our Sprinkler Timer Rebate program on social media.

2020 Program by the Numbers

Services Provided to Customers	
Program	Activity Level
Youth Education	
Classroom Presentations	348 presentations / 7,671 students
Community Outreach	
Festivals and Events	Almost all canceled due to COVID-19. 2 in-person and 1 virtual festival / 460 attendees
Single & Multifamily Indoor Programs	
Multifamily Premium Toilets	5 buildings / 88 toilets
Single Family Premium Toilets	344 homes / 435 toilets
Commercial Indoor Programs	
Kitchen Measures	3 projects / 3 fixtures
Restroom Measures	2 projects / 76 fixtures
Cooling/Heating	1 project / 1 fixture
Technical Assistance	3 water use assessments and 2 consultations
Landscape Programs	
WaterSense Timer Rebates	50 timers
Custom Irrigation System Rebates	2 projects
Savvy Gardener Classes	9 classes / 243 attendees / 99 new to the classes
Garden Hotline	233 water related questions 5,826 soil, lawn and plant questions (many relevant to water use)
Natural Yard Care Guides and Fact Sheets	9,403 brochures distributed
Landscape Professionals Training	Trainings canceled due to COVID-19

SUPPORTING ELEMENTS

For Customers

- Technical assistance to residential and commercial customers on irrigation efficiency issues.
- Technical assistance to commercial customers on indoor efficiency issues.
- Regional website www.savingwater.org.
- Regional hotline 206-684-SAVE.
- Regional Language Line, offering language interpretation by phone.
- Take-home items including toilet leak detection kits and hose washers.

For Partner Utilities

- Seasonal marketing kits with social media and print messages for use in utility newsletters and other communications.
- Online Image Bank repository of photos for use in utility newsletters and other communications.
- Support for Water Use Efficiency Rule reporting.
- Saving Water Partnership annual report.
- Messaging on water conservation benefits for salmon, in fulfillment of resource agency and tribal agreements.



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This information can be made available on request to accommodate people with disabilities and those who need language assistance.

May, 2021



Cover image:
"Harmony" by Kelly Cannell, 2015
Limited Edition Serigraph
28 1/2" x 19 1/2"

Seattle Public Utilities 1% for Art Portable Works Collection,
administered by Seattle Office of Arts & Culture

Photo: Spike Mafford

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