

# The Regional Water Efficiency Program 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW



## HOW TO SET YOUR SPRINKLER TIMER FOR HEALTHY PLANTS



The Regional Water Authority's Regional Water Efficiency Program (RWEPP) includes 19 water providers serving 2 million people who work in partnership to promote water efficiency in the Sacramento region. Since 2001, the program has provided a forum for participants to:

- Engage in a regional strategy to preserve local water resources
- Network and share best practices
- Leverage dollars with other regional utilities and partners
- Build economies of scale for attracting grants
- Maximize advertising dollars for broad and consistent customer outreach
- Provide a regional school education program

**In 2019, the RWEPP continued these activities and more.** The program fostered rebate programs and partnerships with local and state agencies; trained landscape professionals in sustainable practices; increased paid advertising online, on radio, in print, and in movie theaters; promoted water efficiency through the news media, influencers, and regional outreach; created snappy new videos and tools; gave away free moisture meters; and conducted new research to evaluate results.

## ATTRACTING GRANT FUNDING

The RWEPP allows members to leverage their investments in water efficiency and take advantage of grant funding available now and in coming years. Since 2003, the program has secured nearly \$12 million from highly competitive grant programs, including more than \$6 million in grants in just the past three years. Through grant funding, water providers have been able to help disadvantaged communities install high-efficiency fixtures, enhance the efficiency of irrigation systems, and provide rebate programs for toilets, clothes washers, and irrigation equipment upgrades.

Grant	Projects	Funds Received	Begin Date	End Date	Local Cost Share
<b>Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Grant</b>	Public Outreach, Capital Radio Garden, and Irrigation Efficiencies	\$1,000,000	1/17/2014	6/30/2020	Yes
<b>Proposition 84 2015 IRWM Grant</b>	Public Outreach, Leak Detection & Repair, Advanced Customer Information Systems, and Direct Install of SMART Irrigation Controllers	\$820,000	8/24/2016	6/30/2021	Yes
<b>Regional San/RWA Annual Water Conservation Program</b>	Rebates for Toilets, Clothes Washers, and Pre-Rinse Spray Valves	\$350,000	6/1/2019	5/1/2020	Yes
<b>2018 CALFED Grant</b>	Sacramento Regional 2018-2020 Residential Water Meter Installation Project	\$750,000	9/21/2018	3/31/2020	Yes

# CREATING A CONDUIT FOR PROGRAMS








The RWEPP provides an avenue for water providers to partner with local and state agencies on rebate programs and services that would otherwise be impractical or impossible. RWEPP manages these programs for water providers and serves as a conduit for funding and reimbursement.

After many years of successful implementation, several programs began to wind down in 2019, including those with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and SMUD.



## Water-Wise Landscape Incentives

In partnership with DWR, RWEPP provided rebates to residential and commercial customers that replaced turf with a low-water landscape and installed efficient sprinklers and drip irrigation. **Results and fixtures provided included:**

 <b>15,600</b> square feet of turf replaced	 <b>9,250</b> drip or low-volume irrigation parts	 <b>141</b> sprinkler heads or nozzles	
 <b>135</b> pipe and pipe fittings	 <b>73</b> landscape water surveys conducted	 <b>49</b> irrigation controllers	 <b>12</b> pressure regulators



## High-Efficiency Toilets

In partnership with Regional San, RWEPP provided 1,868 rebates for replacing older toilets with high-efficiency models.



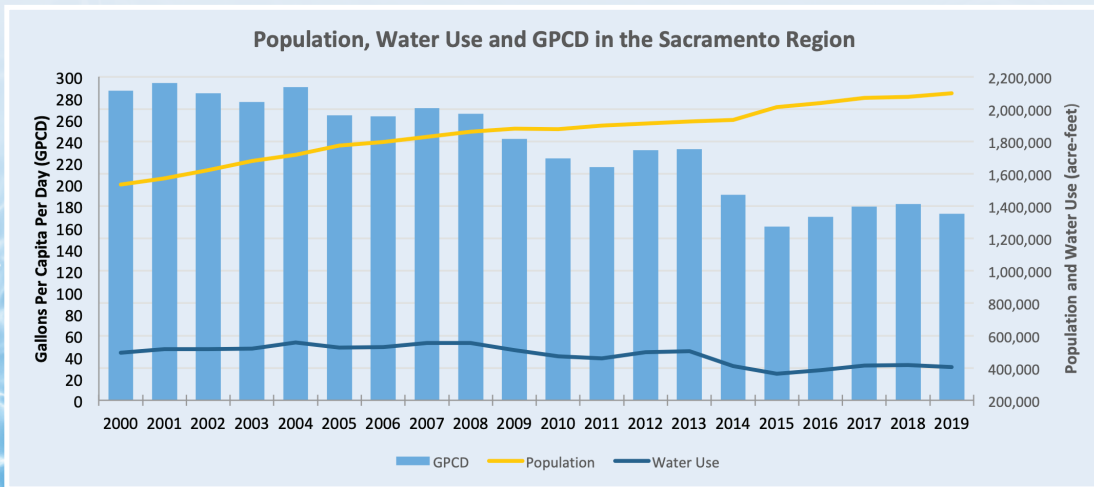
## High-Efficiency Clothes Washers

In partnership with SMUD and Regional San, RWEPP provided 366 rebates for replacing older clothes washers with high-efficiency models.



# TRACKING WATER USE

Over the last 20 years, the region's water use has been steady even though the population grew 29 percent from 1.5 million to 2.1 million people.



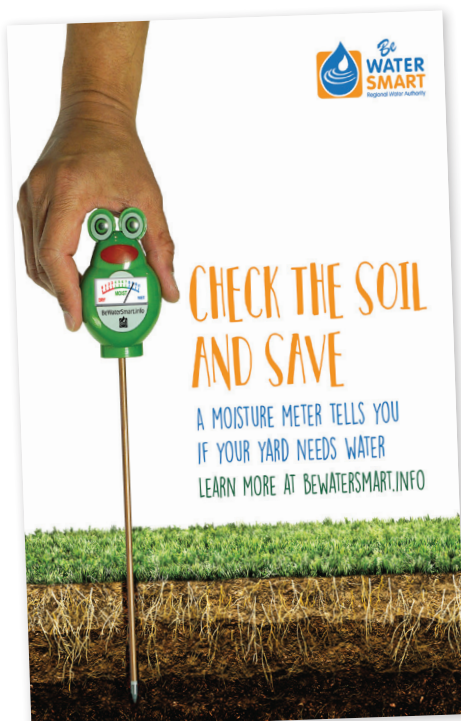
## MAXIMIZING A REGIONAL VOICE

The RWEF provides an avenue for participants to communicate a consistent message about water efficiency while maximizing advertising dollars. Under the Be Water Smart brand, RWEF participants conduct advertising campaigns, support initiatives such as Mulch Mayhem, represent water providers at events, and provide comprehensive water efficiency information through its website [BeWaterSmart.info](http://BeWaterSmart.info).



### Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper Certification Program

The Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) certification program trains landscape professionals in water-efficient and sustainable landscape practices. RWA serves as the Professional Certifying Organization for the Sacramento region in partnership with American River College (ARC), responsible for teaching the QWEL curriculum. In 2019, RWA and ARC held three training courses, educating 85 landscape professionals in QWEL principals either for continuing education credits or to take the certification exam. In all, 54 professionals passed the exam to become QWEL certified.









### Encouraging Residents to “Check & Save”

In 2019, the RWEF launched the second year of a multi-year campaign focused on tackling the landscape overwatering problem by encouraging people to water their lawn and garden efficiently and to stop overwatering. The approach: Help target audiences solve a problem—namely the mystery of knowing how much water their landscape really needs to be healthy. The call to action: “Check the Soil and Save”—check soil moisture with a moisture meter before turning on sprinklers.

## Advertising and Public Service Announcements

The RWEF purchased radio and digital advertising on Capital Public Radio stations KXJZ-FM (News) and KXPR-FM (Classical/Jazz), Facebook, and the Google Display Network, commercial radio via the Total Traffic and Weather Network (NewsRadio KFBK, Talk 650 KSTE, Soft AC 92.5 "The Breeze," and 93.7 "The River" New Classic Rock), as well as pitched radio public service announcements (PSAs) and television PSAs (produced from the Water Spots video contest).

					
<b>Capital Public Radio Sponsorships</b>	<b>Total Traffic and Weather</b>	<b>Facebook Advertising</b>	<b>Google Display Network</b>	<b>Television PSAs</b>	<b>Radio PSAs</b>
<b>396</b> sponsorships (276 paid, 120 provided at no cost)	<b>306</b> messages	<b>1,719,101</b> impressions	<b>1,248,607</b> impressions	<b>6</b> outlets broadcast	<b>15</b> stations broadcast
<b>1,821,600</b> impressions	<b>2,173,500</b> impressions	<b>872,545</b> people reached	<b>3,829</b> clicks	<b>435</b> times	<b>740</b> times
<b>283,800</b> people reached	<b>527,837</b> people reached	<b>27,518</b> clicks		<b>2,215,000</b> impressions	<b>2,112,500</b> impressions
<b>6.4</b> frequency	<b>4.1</b> frequency			<b>\$32,750</b> in value (had RWEF purchased as advertising)	<b>\$47,600</b> in value (had RWEF purchased as advertising)

## Print Advertising

RWA partnered with five RWEF participants to promote checking soil moisture before turning on sprinklers in local newspapers throughout the Sacramento region throughout the summer. RWA covered costs for graphic design and half of the direct costs for advertising for running co-branded ads in the *Elk Grove Citizen*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Folsom Telegraph*, *West Roseville News*, and *West Sacramento News Ledger*. Partners included the Elk Grove Water District, Sacramento Suburban Water District, and the cities of Folsom, Roseville and West Sacramento.

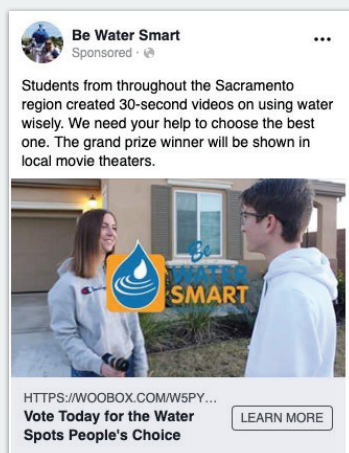
■ 5 RWEF participants ■ 5 publications ■ 95,880 combined circulation ■ 300,000 combined estimated readership

## Media Outreach

Multiple print, broadcast, and online media hits featured RWA spokespeople promoting Check and Save messages. Results included a feature story by reporter/influential blogger Debbie Arrington in the *Sacramento News & Review* ("A Little Frog Shall Lead Them") and post on her popular blog Sacramento Digs Gardening, story on News Radio KFBK ("Water Providers Urge You to Check Soil Moisture Before Using Sprinklers"), interviews broadcast on nearly all regional radio stations (18 in all) and posts by influential blogger "The Plant Lady."



## Water Spots Video Contest Educates Students While Providing Outreach Opportunities



Middle and high school students from 14 Sacramento-area schools submitted 116 entries in the 2019 Water Spots Video Contest, RWA's annual school outreach program. The contest challenged kids to "Show Off Your Water

Smarts" in 30-second public service videos.

The top 10 videos as selected by the judges were put to an online "People's Choice" vote April 10-30, 2019. More than 6,700 votes were cast during online voting—a record number. Also, there were over 12,500 visits to the contest site and 6,700 shares.

Winners received cash prizes and the chance to see their video run as advertising in June at three area theaters—the Century Arden 14 in Sacramento, Century Laguna 16 in Elk Grove, and Studio Movie Grill in Rocklin, extending RWA's messaging. In addition, Placer County Water Agency's Ross Branch appeared on Good Day Sacramento on behalf of the RWEPA to present the First Place/Grand Prize live on camera. Good Day also ran the Grand Prize PSA as part of the story.

### Century Arden 14 (Sacramento) and Century Laguna 16 (Elk Grove)

- 4,261 ads seen on screen
- 1,817 added value on lobby video monitors
- 141,394 theater impressions
- 38,215 lobby impressions

### Studio Movie Grill (Rocklin)

- 28,000 to 40,000 average monthly attendance



## "Ask the Expert" Video Series

RWA produced several new videos as part of its series focused on helping customers solve common landscape watering problems. New for 2019 were brief "Ask the Expert" videos featuring experts who tested well during focus group research. These include:

- **Tree Care Tips from the Sacramento Tree Foundation**
- **Fall Gardening Tips from Marlene Simon "The Plant Lady"**
- **Smart Irrigation Tips from Julie of Green Acres Nursery and Supply**

## Sacramento River Cats Partnership

The RWEPA continued its long-standing partnership with the Sacramento River Cats to promote water efficiency tips to the more than 557,700 fans attending games and 100,000 guests at events at Raley Field each year. In 2019, outreach included a froggy moisture meter scavenger hunt for kids at games, "Lucky Row" giveaways of moisture meters, and the campaign's artwork posted in restroom stalls for a "captive" audience. In addition, Check and Save videos played before games. These included a video featuring mascot Dinger using a moisture meter as part of his "pre-game routine" before turning on sprinklers.



## Mulch Mayhem

Six local water providers hosted Mulch Mayhem events on Saturday, May 4, 2019. This popular event helps local residents get their landscapes and yards ready for the hot days of summer. RWA supports Mulch Mayhem through facilitating the involvement of members, digital advertising, and regional media outreach.



## Online Moisture Meter Free Give-Away and Survey

In 2019 RWA continued its free moisture meter give-away as part of its news media and social media outreach program, giving away 3,000 froggy moisture meters via an online request form on [BeWaterSmart.info](http://BeWaterSmart.info) or at events.

In October 2019, RWA conducted an email survey of the 1,952 people who received a moisture meter through the website. The results provide a snapshot of the larger population and is an important indicator of the program's success and continued potential. Survey results showed that audiences not only are using their meter to check soil moisture but they are also saving water as a result—fulfilling the program's ultimate goal. The survey also showed that respondents heard about the moisture meter offer through RWA's outreach program, namely social media and radio advertising.

### Out of 430 responses received (a 22% return rate):

- 72% said they use the meter daily or weekly
- 42% said they water less as a result

*"I never knew how much I was over-watering until I got a meter"*

*"It is so hard to know how much water is in the soil, this takes a lot of the guess work away."*

*"I lowered my watering by two minutes per cycle and a total of four minutes per watering day, and my lawn has good moisture and looks great."*



### Winner of a 2020 CAPIO Award

RWA's Check the Soil and Save outreach program was honored for excellence by CAPIO, a statewide association of public sector communicators, which recognizes "the most creative and effective efforts" in communication campaigns.



## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

The success of the Regional Water Efficiency Program depends upon the RWA members who financially contribute to the program. **Thank you to 2019 RWEF participants:**

### RWA MEMBERS:

California American Water  
Carmichael Water District  
Citrus Heights Water District  
City of Folsom  
City of Lincoln  
City of Roseville  
City of Sacramento

City of West Sacramento  
Del Paso Manor Water District  
El Dorado Irrigation District  
Elk Grove Water District  
Fair Oaks Water District  
Golden State Water Company  
Orange Vale Water Company  
Placer County Water Agency

Rancho Murieta Community Services District  
Sacramento County Water Agency  
Sacramento Suburban Water District  
San Juan Water District

### RWA ASSOCIATES:

Regional San  
SMUD

## LEARN MORE

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