

WaterSense-AWE Webinar Recap

When in Drought - Lessons Learned



TODAY'S SPEAKERS

- **Ron Burke** – Alliance for Water Efficiency
- **Bill Christiansen** – Alliance for Water Efficiency
- **Julius Duncan** – EPA WaterSense
- **Krista Guerrero** – Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- **Rebecca Kimitch** – Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

ORIGINAL DATE:
JULY 20, 2021

[WaterSense Webinars](#)

[Webinar Recording on YouTube](#)

WEBINAR SUMMARY

In the introduction, Mr. Duncan went over an introduction to WaterSense and provided links to tips and resources for communities going through drought. Following that, Mr. Burke and Mr. Christiansen talked about several resources by AWE focused on drought. The "Use and Effectiveness of Municipal Irrigation Restrictions During Drought" guide was released in January 2020. It focuses on the demand reductions that can be achieved through different levels of restrictions, messaging and enforcement, and recommendations for water providers. AWE also has an online resource library with resources and other drought related reports. The freely available model, AWE Sales Forecasting and Rate Model, is available at <https://www.FinancingSustainableWater.org>.

FEATURED SPEAKERS: KRISTA GUERRERO AND REBECCA KIMITCH

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is the nation's largest wholesale water provider. Water is imported from Northern Sierra and Colorado River Aqueduct and 45% of the water is from the local supply. Over the past three decades, the regional population has grown, but the retail water demand has decreased, due to management and efficiency efforts.

Due to the inconsistency of dry periods and wet periods, they have had to make plans for the constant variability. Prior to the last drought, Metropolitan heavily invested in indoor rebates (toilets, spray nozzles, dishwashers, etc.). They noticed that they were reaching a maximum market distribution with indoor products and began looking at other rebate programs they could offer. In 2015 they began their Large Landscape Survey program.

TURF REMOVAL PROGRAM

Metropolitan started the Turf Removal Program in January 2014. The program offered \$2 per square foot of turf removed as an important response to the drought. The scope became the nation's largest turf removal program, and the response was record breaking as well. Metropolitan removed over 190 million square feet of turf. Although the program was a success, they found that some of the projects chose to replace the turf landscape with rocks. They learned that with turf removal, water savings should not be

New WaterSense Materials at
<https://www.epa.gov/watersense>

- [WaterSense resources for When In Drought](#)
- [Certified Irrigation Professional Harvests Gold from Water-Saving Products](#)
- [Albuquerque Apartments Realize Savings through Rebates and Retrofits](#)

the only goal. Maintenance should be considered along with the use of trees, native plants, and proper irrigation choices.

With those lessons learned, they developed the Turf Replacement Program. It still offers \$2 per square foot, but now also requires a stormwater retention feature and a minimum of three plants for every 100 square feet of landscape. It also includes modifications to convert or remove overhead sprinklers. Resources developed helped to inform consumers and are available at bewaterwise.com.

WATER EFFICIENT DUAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Metropolitan offers a combined version of the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) and the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) certification programs. Both certifications are WaterSense certified programs and more information is on the WaterSense website at <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/professional-certification-0>. Participants learn about irrigation, water budgeting, and maintenance.

MULTIMEDIA CAMPAIGNS

From previous droughts, Metropolitan learned that different circumstances require different responses depending on the customer. The “Turn” campaign was focused on encouraging increased efforts and overall behavioral change to water use in Southern California. Commercials were developed to encourage people to turn off the water when not in use. Campaign materials were also developed in multiple languages and to highlight the severity of the drought.

The H2Love campaign was developed to encourage Southern Californians to have a long-term outlook of water resources. Materials developed highlighted ways to make a commitment to water conservation as a way of life.

In 2019 the focus shifted to promoting the new Turf Replacement Program. Metropolitan identified that they needed to promote and also educate homeowners on how to use the program. By developing educational materials in-house, they were able to develop materials quickly. These materials were successful because they provided a visual message, opened conversation, and were timely.

SPEAKER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Is the AWE “Restrictions During Drought” publication available to everyone?

A: The executive summary is available to everyone. The full report is an AWE member only resource.

Q: When do you anticipate the release of the “Native Plant Maintenance” guide?

A: The guide is still in progress but is anticipated to be available for full release by the end of 2021.

Q: How do you bridge the supply chain gap with commercial landscapers that generally plant the most common drought tolerant plants rather than a diverse group of plants for the landscape?

A: Metropolitan implements the Water Efficient Landscape Dual Certification Program to promote different types of plant selection and native plants. This is combined with the Calscape Nursery program to stock different native and newer plants.