
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COMMISSION
FROM: JAMES HIGMAN, CHAIR, WATER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT WATER CONSERVATION
CAMPAIGN
DATE: 12/14/01

GRU Staff presented a description of a Water Conservation Awareness Campaign that they propose to support during the City's Water Management Advisory Committee meeting held on December 6, 2001. The St. Johns River Water Management District will manage the Water Conservation Awareness Campaign and to date a total of 19 public utilities have committed to share in the funding. The Water Management Advisory Committee adopted the following motion unanimously:

We support GRU's participation in a public awareness campaign by the St. Johns River Water Management District in the amount of \$50,000 to promote water conservation.

Please consider the Water Management Advisory Committee's support for funding this conservation effort when GRU brings this item to the City Commission for approval.


James Higman, Chair
Water Management Advisory Committee

Cc: WMAC Members
David Richardson, Staff Liaison

#002262
Submitted 1/18/02

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Changing Behavior



St. Johns River
Water Management District

Background:

Providing affordable and adequate supplies of water to a growing population is a challenge for the St. Johns River Water Management District and the water supply utilities serving the District's 19-county area.

Historically, groundwater has been the primary source of water to meet demand. Groundwater is the most cost effective and readily available source for public supply. But as Florida's population grows and demand for water increases, groundwater alone may not be able to meet those needs.

Long-term sustainability of groundwater is vital to meeting the future water supply needs of the District. Though District studies have identified areas that will not be able to meet future demand from current groundwater sources by the year 2020 without causing harm to those sources, efficient use of water could delay the need for alternative water supplies.

The District has identified water conservation as an important strategy to reduce water demand. Water conservation and responsible management of water resources can extend the current water supply. This extension may also reduce or delay the need to develop costly new supply sources and treatment facilities.

The District is committed to maximize water conservation through economically, technically and environmentally feasible means. This ongoing commitment is District-wide and includes regulatory authority, cooperative projects, financial assistance, technical assistance and public outreach.

Water supply utilities share the District's desire to increase water conservation as a means of extending the current water supply to meet future needs.

However, to achieve the level of conservation required to offset growing demand, water suppliers and the District must increase public education on the importance of conserving water. Public behavior regarding water conservation must change in order for conservation to be an effective means of providing an adequate supply of water for the future.

Current educational efforts:

Presently, the District's water conservation education program utilizes various "unpaid" means of promoting indoor and outdoor conservation. Efforts include seeking newspaper articles and editorials, radio and TV news coverage, radio and TV public service announcements, presentations to community groups, displays at community events and distributing thousands of pieces of conservation literature.

Likewise, water supply utilities conduct water conservation education activities. These efforts are required by their Consumptive Use Permits. Most water supply utilities focus their efforts on securing unpaid media news coverage on water conservation and conducting programs aimed at specific target audiences, such as school children, and plumbing retro-fit and landscape seminars for homeowners.

Combined, these efforts have been successful in educating a certain percentage of the population. However, a large segment of the population is either not receiving the information or feel water conservation is not important to them.

For example, attendees of seminars and presentations are self-selecting, that is, they already have an interest in saving water or money. Habitual abusers of water do not attend these gatherings. A tremendous amount of effort, and sometimes dollars, are expended to attract and communicate to relatively small numbers.

Broad-based communications are needed to educate and motivate large numbers of people.

Communication challenges:

Given the dynamic, technical and political arena in which water resource decisions are made, it is not surprising that comprehensive communication about the importance of water conservation is difficult to achieve.

Some issues, such as the consumptive use permitting process, may never be fully understood by the general public but a simple message on water conservation can be understood.

In developing and communicating this type of message, several communication challenges must be overcome:

- Separate, but similar, conservation messages are distributed by both the District and water supply utilities to the same audience, often leading to some confusion. At times, people don't know which message, or if both messages, apply to them.
- Most water conservation communications tend to target lawn irrigation because irrigation has been identified as the area of most abuse. While reducing outdoor irrigation to appropriate levels is extremely important in a successful water conservation effort, focusing on this one aspect of conservation tends to make homeowners feel as though they are being singled out as "the bad guy"; an attitude that can result in reluctance to reduce water use (why just me, if no one else is responsible for reducing use?).
- This almost singular focus on lawn watering also reduces communications effectiveness to other people such as apartment and condominium dwellers (I'm not responsible.).
- The rapid influx of new residents in the District presents an additional communications challenge. According to data compiled by *USA Today*, population within the District increased, on average, 14.36 percent during the past decade.

By the year 2020, the District's population is expected to increase by 50 percent. Educating the need for water conservation is more difficult with newcomers because:

- New residents are generally unaware of Florida's water resource issues.
- Due to the abundance of surface water, they do not perceive Florida as having a water resource problem.
- They bring experiences and expectations of water delivery from sources other than an underground aquifer.
- They mimic behavior of neighbors.

This influx of newcomers, the limited reach of non-paid media efforts, and the self-selecting nature of seminar participants represent challenges that can be successfully overcome with broader communications efforts.

The drought:

Our present severe drought conditions have created a sense of urgency for water conservation. This heightened awareness about drought conditions provides a positive lead-in to promote long-term water conservation.

While the drought has heightened awareness, many residents feel the need for water conservation is only temporary; i.e., the need to conserve is reduced when it rains.

In an effort to protect the water resources from harm, communication efforts during the drought have focused on immediate reduction of water use through promoting water restrictions. While the goal of this type of communications is a change in short-term behavior while the restrictions are in place, it has generated some confusion between short-term and long-term water supply management.

Also, residents are confused because restrictions may vary within the media market. Apartment and condominium residents tend to not pay attention since they are not concerned about lawn watering restrictions. Private well owners often believe restrictions (and therefore, conservation measures) don't apply to them. Residents argue about why they should conserve water while new population growth is supported with new Consumptive Use Permits or while golf courses, commercial nurseries and agricultural operations are allowed to water when they can't.

Increased communications plays a critical role in solving some of these issues. Communications that change long-term behavior is even better.

Positive, comprehensive communications work:

Most water resource and supply entities around the country communicate in similar fashion – media and public relations, seminars, and occasional public service announcements.

In a study about the most effective water conservation communications, Ben Dziegielewski, associate professor of geography at Southern Illinois University, cites five observations relating to successful campaigns. These include:

- Drought episodes establish the seriousness of water resource issues in the public mind, making them more open to stronger messages.
- Consumers are more likely to change behavior if they know how much water they use and how much they can save through conservation.
- Water conservation efforts must be perceived as equitable; that is, all members of the community are impacted. To create strong group identity and group behavior, messages should explain how individual efforts produce long-term benefits to the community as a whole.
- Messages that portray conservation as being a minimal inconvenience and sacrifice are more successful.

The District is proposing a paid-media water conservation awareness campaign to be conducted starting in 2002 to address these issues. Using paid media is the most effective and controllable way to communicate a consistent message to the broadest audience.

The 2002 Water Conservation Campaign:

Changing Behavior, Saving Water

The District is investigating the potential strategy, costs and resulting impact that such a campaign can bring.

Initial findings suggest that to be successful the 2002 campaign must be:

- Clear and concise
- Educational (about our water resource and pressures that affect it negatively)
- Beneficial (how saving water is positive for Florida residents)
- Emotional (that encourages positive social acceptance of water conservation)

This comprehensive communications plan is proposed to deliver a consistent conservation message to the District's 19-county area during the 12 months of 2002 using targeted television, radio, outdoor and other forms of mass media.

A synergistic approach:

This campaign proposes, for the first time, to present a clear, consistent conservation message throughout the District.

Having the water utilities and District speak with one voice allows the public to focus on a central message of water conservation. Additionally, the District is examining the possibility of re-designing its present water conservation literature to be consistent with and reflect the message of the 2002 campaign.

Likewise, this campaign is not meant to eliminate the current public education and media relations efforts of the District or that of water utilities and local governments. Not only should these efforts continue, but interest in public education and outreach may increase due to greater awareness of and acceptance for water conservation as a way of life.

The synergies of a unified theme and consistent message delivered throughout the District are more easily remembered and acted on by the general public than is the present system of multiple messages overlaying each other.

The target audience:

While the water conservation message applies to almost anyone, the campaign would focus on the following targets:

- **Primary Target** – single family dwelling residents
- **Secondary Target** – multi-family dwelling residents
- **Tertiary Targets** – employees of permitted users and visitors to our area

Generally, the water conservation message will need to reach across demographic lines. Media selections would be made to expose the broadest segments of the District's population to the water conservation message. The messages would also be repeated sufficiently, and through various media, to become top of mind among the public.

The campaign would be designed to have most people thinking about water use and how to conserve the resource at home, at work and during recreation.

In total, this campaign would begin to change attitudes and behaviors about water conservation, with the ultimate goal of changing water use habits and making conserving water a practice demanded by society at large.

The campaign budget:

The District's 19-county area includes a few of the largest and most expensive media markets in Florida. We anticipate the need to utilize radio, television, outdoor advertising, and some newspaper advertising as the campaign's primary vehicles. While other media types may also be considered, the major media outlets provide the greatest ability to effectively reach the most people in a cost-efficient manner.

After studying the costs of advertising in these markets, it has been determined that a campaign of this magnitude would require financial partnerships among the District, water supply utilities and local governments. The goal is to sufficiently reach the broadest audience in a repeated, meaningful way that will result in behavior change.

District staff members are considering recommending that its Governing Board allocate up to 50% of these costs, with the balance being contributed by participating water utilities and local governments.

How you will benefit:

The participation and financial partnership of water utilities and local governments are a vital part of the proposed campaign's success. While a lower-budget campaign may have some impact in our region, it is only through a total combined effort that this campaign will produce the desired results.

While your participation contributes to the overall impact of making water conservation a priority in the minds of District residents, there are a number of additional benefits which you will derive:

- Participation assists with meeting the water conservation education requirements of your Consumptive Use Permit.
- Participation will also assist with reducing water use among your customers, helping your utility stay within the water allocations of your permit.
- Reduced water use delays capital expenditures for water treatment or infrastructure necessitated by having to seek alternative water resources to meet demand.
- Reduced water use also decreases the possibility of severe water shortages.

Additionally, the District Governing Board and the Governor of Florida will be made aware of your participation. District staff members will also notify appropriate news media and government agencies of your participation, extending the power of your commitment to water conservation.

A word on branding:

This proposed campaign takes into consideration the need to protect your brand within your water delivery market area.

Major sponsors of this campaign will be identified in a co-branded manner with the St. Johns River Water Management District. Co-branded recognition will appear only in your market area, providing greater awareness of your participation with your customers. Where practical, the logo of a major sponsor and the District's logo will appear as part of the creative message on television, and in newspaper and outdoor advertising. Radio messages will carry verbal recognition of sponsorship.

The specifics for use of logos, tag lines and positioning statements will be part of creative development for the campaign.

Conclusion:

The demands on water resources in our region are increasing rapidly. These demands are projected to exceed the ability to meet the needs of a growing population by the year 2020 without damaging these same resources. While public awareness and educational outreach efforts of the District, water utilities and local governments have helped encourage water conservation, only a percentage of the population is being reached.

To have an effective, long-lasting impact on water use and conservation, a paid media campaign is being proposed by the St. Johns River Water Management District for the year 2002. This campaign will be designed to make the public think about water and be more receptive to reducing its use.

The benefits of this campaign will be shared by water utilities by helping meet permitted water allocations, by the District as manager of regional water resources, and by the public by delaying the need for getting water from expensive alternate sources.

As a joint effort, the District and water supply utilities can make water conservation a way of life in our region of Florida.

Your Communications Partner:

The Hoffman Agency

The Hoffman Agency, of Jacksonville, Florida, was selected by the St. Johns River Water Management District to develop and manage the 2002 Water Conservation Awareness Campaign. The agency was selected by a competitive RFP process that involved agencies from Jacksonville, Orlando, Gainesville and Miami.

The Hoffman Agency is a full-service advertising and marketing communications firm. For eight years, the agency has provided successful communications solutions for a variety of clients in categories such as:

- Banking and Financial Services
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