



San Diego County Water Authority And Its 24 Member Agencies

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News Release

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Thanks for Planting Me! ‘Spokesplants’ Promote Landscape Transformation *Sustainable landscapes will help sustain region in hotter, drier climate*

May 25, 2023 – The San Diego County Water Authority is launching a public outreach and education campaign this summer to encourage wider adoption of sustainable landscapes that are more suitable for the region’s Mediterranean climate.

The “Thanks for Planting Me!” campaign offers gratitude to the hundreds of thousands of San Diegans who are using water efficiently along with friendly encouragement to expand regenerative low-water landscapes as climate change stresses water supplies across the Southwest. It complements similar efforts to promote on-going water-use efficiency by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the State of California’s Save Our Water program.

The grant-supported campaign is driven by a collection of animated plant personalities like Succulent Sam and Rose Marie who express their appreciation for being adopted across San Diego County as the “next-generation landscape.” Powered by state grant funds to promote water-use efficiency, the “spokesplants” will appear on a variety of digital and outdoor advertising platforms starting in May, which is Water Awareness Month. The Water Authority and its retail member agencies are also planning to participate in community events over the summer – including the San Diego County Fair – to promote landscapes that provide numerous environmental benefits, including storm-water retention and healthy soils.



In addition, the Water Authority has renewed a long-running partnership with San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance to co-brand signage at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park's conservation garden. The signs educate park visitors about water use practices on park grounds and how people can improve water use on their own landscapes.

The "Thanks for Planting Me!" campaign is supported financially by a grant from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, administered by State of California, Department of Water Resources.

"While the recent rains and snowpack have provided relief from three years of drought, the long-term prognosis is still concerning," said Water Authority General Manager Sandra L. Kerl. "We should not lose the urgency created by the drought to continue adoption of low-water landscapes. This summer outreach effort is a fun way to both thank residents and remind them about resources that the Water Authority and our partners offer as we prepare for inevitable dry years ahead."

Those resources include rebates for lawn replacement, rain barrels and other water-efficient devices; on-demand videos filled with landscaping tips; plant guides to make selection easier; and digital workbooks that provide guidance for creating beautiful, low-maintenance landscapes that use far less water than turfgrass. About half of the water used at typical homes is used outside, providing ample opportunities for long-term reductions in water-use. For more information, go to www.sdcwa.org/plant-me.

"There are now thousands of residential and commercial landscapes in our region that show just how attractive and functional climate-friendly landscapes are; most people don't need or use grass – they just need a little encouragement to find an alternative," Kerl said. "Using the summer months to plan for landscape upgrades means you can be ready to take action in the fall and winter when it's time to plant."

Decades of investments in water supplies, water infrastructure and efficiency measures have insulated San Diego County from recent droughts. However, long-term challenges across the Southwest remain due to the depletion of the Colorado River and groundwater basins.

"Fundamentally, we are no longer talking about drought but an entirely different reality than we were in decades past – the era of climate-driven impacts to our natural resources," Kerl said. "Every person in San Diego and the western U.S. must continue to eliminate water waste, adopt low-water landscapes, capture rainwater, and take other steps to adapt to a hotter and drier future."

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The San Diego County Water Authority sustains a \$268 billion regional economy and the quality of life for 3.3 million residents through a multi-decade water supply diversification plan, major infrastructure investments and forward-thinking policies that promote fiscal and environmental responsibility. A public agency created in 1944, the Water Authority delivers wholesale water supplies to 24 retail water providers, including cities, special districts and a military base.



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