The Future of Water Reuse in the State of Maryland

Public Outreach Issues

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Fundamental Themes of Successful Water Reuse Campaigns
Common Themes of Success

- Reuse projects must articulate a clear need for more water
- The public is informed from the beginning of the planning stage
- Outreach focuses on the benefits to the community
- Clear and open communication with stakeholders is essential
The Most Common Concerns

- More water = more growth
- Using wastewater is yucky
- Can this hurt me or my family? Or my dog?
- Will this raise my rates?
- Will recycled water damage the landscape?
Market Research Findings

- There is a profound mistrust of government
- When awareness is low, anxiety is high
- Most people have little knowledge of local water supply issues
- “Yuck Factor” must be squarely addressed
- The more information people have, the higher level of support
Market Research Findings

Recycled water customers require special attention:

- Service should be hands-on
- Water should be discounted
- Most customers like positive publicity
Stress the Benefits of Reuse

- Recycled water helps conserve drinking water supplies
- Recycled water is drought-proof
- It’s economical compared to new water supplies
- Recycled water is smart reuse of a valuable resource
- Recycled water saves energy
Successful Water Recycling Programs

- San Antonio, Texas
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Orlando, Florida
- Las Virgenes MWD, CA
- South Bay Water Recycling, CA
San Antonio’s Story

- Surging population & periodic droughts required a solution
- Started with Community Outreach Plan
- Used community fairs, materials, advertising & bill inserts
- Comprehensive school outreach program
Conserve II, Orlando

- Faced with degradation of water quality & population increases
- Recycled water used for citrus crop production
- Required extensive studies to prove safety to farmers
- Largest reuse project in the world
South Bay Water Recycling

- Faced with discharge issues and serious droughts
- Required construction of 100+ miles of pipelines through 3 cities
- Public outreach started concurrently with preliminary design
- Citizens Advisory Committee gave strong support to project
Common Themes of Success

• These projects articulated a clear need for more water
• Issues and concerns were addressed and resolved
• The public was informed from the beginning of the planning stage
• Outreach focused on the benefits to the community
• Agencies understand that open communication is essential
How Outreach Built Support

- Reuse is viewed as a beneficial water supply
- Public understanding and acceptance is high
- People know what purple pipes are for
- Public can see the results with green playgrounds, golf courses, landscape and crops
How Did They Get There?

- Began with a comprehensive strategic plan
- Prepared realistic budgets
- Designed outreach tailored to their community
- Addressed fears and concerns
- Provided customers with good service
More Keys To Success

- Build trust with candor, openness, responsiveness
- Reach the public using various means (newspapers, events, mailings)
- Encourage and cultivate leadership from local officials
- Keep the media fully briefed throughout the project
How to Start a Public Outreach Program

- “Marketing Nonpotable Recycled Water – A Guidebook for Successful Outreach & Customer Marketing”
- Purchase through the Watereuse Foundation
- Provides guidance, templates & tools
More Successful Outreach Strategies

- Train staff to provide superb service to customers
- Anticipate crises and have contingency plans in place
- Prepare for construction outreach
- Incorporate water reuse into school education outreach
Other Ways to Learn about Water Recycling

- Visit Watereuse.org for resources
- Attend reuse conferences
- Tour other successful water reuse programs

Communication is vital to the success of reuse
Questions and Comments?

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