



Water Grand Challenges: Education & Outreach

National Water Conservation Websites

Background – National websites dedicated to informal education regarding water conservation provide stakeholders with easily accessible information for improved resource use practices. These websites provide vital water conservation information, links to nationwide calendars of water events, resource libraries, and news regarding water conservation activities for stakeholders nation-wide. The audience that benefits from these sites includes homeowners, business owners, academics, private utility companies, and private citizens. National water conservation sites are funded through nationally recognized non-profits, or through public departments responsible for disseminating resource conservation materials across the country (i.e. EPA WaterSense). Many websites provide general information about water conservation methods for both outside and in the home, as well as Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water use in commercial facilities, and feature partnerships in each state. The following national websites provide patrons with water conservation resources:

- Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) WaterSense.org
- Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE)’s Home Water Works
- American Water Works Association (AWWA)

EPA WaterSense – EPA “WaterSense” program began in 2006 and has led to the savings of over 280 billion gallons of water and \$4.7 billion in water bills.¹ Through WaterSense, companies can choose to use products that are deemed water efficient through the [WaterSense partnership program](#). Water efficient products and practices bear the WaterSense label (Fig. 1), which signifies that products realize water saving on a national level.¹ Consumers can search for improved water conservation products or rebates by name, brand, or location. WaterSense has over [3,500 partners](#) including businesses, organizations, and government agencies but does not provide links to their pages or programs. Applicable techniques for water resource management, such as landscaping and construction methods are also available through WaterSense. This website also has conservation resources and outreach materials for children, including an [interactive game](#) designed to increase knowledge of water-saving methods. Although there are many applied conservation methods and external resources available through WaterSense, the site includes very few publications and links only to the AWE resources library.



Figure 1: WaterSense Label
(EPA 2012)

Alliance for Water Efficiency and Home Water Works - [AWE](#) is a stakeholder-based non-profit organization funded through the Great Lakes Protection Fund, and is dedicated to



promoting efficient and sustainable water use in the United States and Canada.² A partner with EPA WaterSense, AWE provides users nationwide with a large resource library featuring research publications produced by the [AWE-ACEEE Water and Energy Research Work Group](#), a [water conservation tracking tool](#) for utility managers, and much more. The AWE interactive [Water Conservation Use Calendar](#) feature is a partner project, funded through a grant by the Home Depot Foundation. This feature is available through the Home Water Works site and actively collects water-use information from website patrons through questions for water using areas and tips on how to save water. Patrons can also explore the steps necessary to begin individual [water outreach and education](#) program via internal links to AWE subcommittees.

Although an active collaborator with several partners to produce educational materials, AWE can function as a standalone entity due to the large amount of built-in resources hosted through the website. AWE offers conferences, seminars, and webinars, often co-hosted with other organizations or entities. Although AWE does not use popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or video/audio clips for web promotion, the website does host an active blog and produces complimentary [Water Efficiency Watch newsletters](#).

American Water Works Association – Unlike EPA WaterSense and AWE, the [American Water Works Association website](#) (AWWA) provides resources appropriate for water professionals rather than the public at large. AWWA is a professional society in which patrons can purchase station-appropriate AWWA [memberships](#) and submit papers for publication in the [Journal AWWA](#). Resources offered with memberships provide industry information for water professionals looking to develop, “professional growth, the acquisition of new skills, exposure to the water industry and enhanced technical knowledge.”² Like AWE, AWWA also produces reports, e-classes, seminars, and conferences for career development, designed to promote advancement of the water industry. In general, professional materials and publications offered through AWWA are expensive for the average water user and provide more in-depth information than most Americans will require for water conservation practices.

¹ Environmental Protection Agency. WaterSense an EPA Partnership Program: Milestones. 12 21, 2012. http://www.epa.gov/watersense/about_us/milestones.html (accessed January 28, 2013).

² The Alliance for Water Efficiency. Promoting the Efficient and Sustainable Use of Water. 2010. <http://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/about/default.aspx> (accessed January 29, 2013).