



## CONNECTING THE DROPS: LINKING URBAN WATER USE WITH LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

Water resources – water quality, stream flows, etc. – consistently rank as Americans’ top environmental concern. Yet, at the local level, many people do not know what they can do to improve water resources in their community. At the same time, many communities have developed environmental conservation and restoration priorities, but struggle to find sustainable funding for implementation. Conserve to Enhance (C2E) provides a new approach to address this funding challenge. The program supports local and regional conservation projects by encouraging households and businesses to use less water and donate the avoided costs on their water bills to a fund supporting priority environmental enhancement projects.

### A NEW APPROACH TO FUND LOCAL PROGRAMS

C2E’s innovative approach provides a new motivation for participation in utility water conservation programs by making a direct link between voluntary efforts to use less water by individuals and businesses and local environmental projects. Once a C2E program is established, water customers can voluntarily participate and:

1. **Conserve water** at their home or business by changing behaviors and/or installing new water conserving retrofits.
2. **Track water savings** compared to their historic water use through their water bills.
3. **Donate** the money saved on their water bill as a result of water conservation to a C2E fund.
4. Then, the C2E fund provides money for **community-selected environmental enhancement projects**, ranging from securing instream flows to restoring native vegetation to installing new green infrastructure projects.

A pilot program in Tucson has saved over 500,000 gallons of potable water and generated thousands of dollars in donations for an environmental restoration project in just a few months.

### MULTIPLE BENEFITS

C2E can provide a range of benefits to your organization and your community as a whole:

- A new, reliable funding stream to achieve environmental enhancement goals including in-stream flows, green infrastructure projects, riparian restoration – whatever your community designates as its priorities;
- An opportunity for dialogue about community priorities for water-related restoration and protection projects and a means to address these priorities;
- Reduced overall water use, potentially improving stream flows, temperature of streams, and other measures of water quantity and quality; and
- Education about not just water conservation, but about the water system as a whole.

Because C2E-supported projects take place in your own community, participants can easily see the impact of their donations on the local environment, strengthening the incentive to conserve.

### INTERESTED IN BRINGING C2E TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Three essential elements are needed to launch a successful C2E program:

1. **Support from local partners** to help implement the program and deliver on environmental goals.
2. **An environmental enhancement project or initiative** that has a water connection, is valued by the community, and is in need of support.
3. **An accounting tool** that tracks participants’ water use, water bills, and C2E donations.

The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center (WRRRC) has experienced staff available to assist with the development of each of these key elements. C2E was originally developed at WRRRC. The Center has led the implementation of a C2E program in Tucson, AZ and is working with communities throughout the West to scope C2E programs. Contact us if you are interested in finding out more about implementing C2E in your community:

Within Arizona:  
Candice Rupprecht  
candicer@cals.arizona.edu  
520-621-6318

Outside Arizona:  
Aaron Lien  
amlien@cals.arizona.edu  
520-621-3795

Funding for Conserve to Enhance is provided by:



For more information, visit: <http://cals.arizona.edu/azwater/conserve2enhance.html>