



## 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, water utilities are ramping up water conservation programs in the face of increasingly scarce water supplies, especially in Western states. Conserve to Enhance (C2E) links these issues for the first time, making a difference in places people care about, while increasing conservation by water users. **Put your customers in the driver’s seat** and allow them to raise funds for local or regional projects they value, while you benefit from their water conservation efforts.

### A NEW APPROACH TO MEET UTILITY WATER CONSERVATION GOALS

C2E’s innovative approach provides a new motivation for consumer participation in water conservation programs by making a direct link between water conservation actions 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 past monthly water use.
3. **Donate** the money saved on their water bill as a result of water conservation to a C2E fund.

If your utility does not have the flexibility to make the billing system adjustments required by C2E, or your utility wants to gauge customer interest in donating to the environment before implementing a full scale program, consider including a checkbox on your water bill. Both C2E and environmental enhancement checkboxes increase customers’ awareness of environmental water needs. But only C2E helps your utility meet its water conservation goals – stretching supplies, avoiding capital costs, responding to drought, and others.

### MULTIPLE BENEFITS

C2E provides a range of benefits to utilities. By providing a new motivation for water conservation, C2E helps engage traditional non-joiners in water conservation – people who are not interested in conserving for the sake of supporting future growth. By linking water conservation with the environment, C2E provides a basis for education about not just water conservation, but the water system as a whole. Utility revenues normally lost because of conservation programs may be recovered if the C2E fund is used to purchase supplemental water from the utility for environmental projects. For utilities with storm water responsibilities, C2E funds can be used to improve green infrastructure. And because C2E-supported projects take place in your own community or region, participants can easily see how their efforts and money are having a meaningful impact for the environment, further strengthening the incentive to conserve. A pilot program in Tucson has saved over 500,000 gallons of potable water and generated thousands of dollars in donations for a local restoration project in just a few months.

### 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.

Utilities can play a key role in the development and implementation of C2E programs. The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) has experienced staff available to assist with evaluating the costs and benefits of implementing C2E and tailoring programs to local goals and opportunities. C2E was originally developed at WRRC. The Center has led implementation of a C2E program in Tucson, AZ and is working with communities throughout the West to develop C2E programs. Contact us if you are interested in finding out more about implementing C2E in your community:

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