

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Laura Margoni Oct 16, 2014

Waste No Water. You may have seen this mantra in the community already – it’s the City of San Diego’s ethos and effort to promote water conservation in the face of California’s severest drought on record. UC San Diego, which has long had ambitious water-saving goals, has been more than willing to help spread the word.

“Water is one of our most important resources,” said Sara McKinstry, Campus Sustainability Manager. “We are always happy to share water conservation tips and raise awareness on campus. Each one of us can definitely do our part to help conserve.”

As part of the effort, various campus social media sites are participating in Waste No Water Wednesday (#WNWwednesday) through the end of October, sharing a conservation tip of the week and encouraging others to do the same. Some tips include: Wash only full loads in the dishwasher, apply mulch around the plants in your garden to reduce the need to water, and defrost frozen foods overnight in the refrigerator instead of using running hot water to thaw. These tips, when combined with other water-saving tips such as turning off the shower or faucet while lathering up, keeping showers to five minutes or less and never hosing down your patio or balcony, can save hundreds of gallons of water per week.

“If everyone at UC San Diego reduced their water use by a gallon a day, we would save more than 18 million gallons a year,” added McKinstry.

While changes in daily habits are essential to facing ongoing water challenges, the campus has also been taking significant action operationally to reduce water consumption to the greatest extent possible.

“Sustainability has long been an integral part of our education, research and campus operations,” said Gary C. Matthews, Vice Chancellor for Resource Management and Planning. “But the severity of the drought has required us to take additional action above the comprehensive water conservation measures and goals we already had in place.”



When the State of California and City of San Diego mandated several water use restrictions this summer, UC San Diego took immediate action, committing to:

- Stopping water leaks upon discovery or within 72 hours of notification
- Watering before 10 a.m. and after 6 p.m.
- Prohibiting excessive irrigation
- Ensuring all decorative water fountains use recirculating pumps

Additionally, the campus identified 352,000 square feet of turf to be converted to low/no-water-use landscape using drought-tolerant plants and groundcover. Nearly half of the area specified—128,000 square feet—is already in the process of being converted, which will save an estimated 2.7 million gallons annually. Once all areas are converted, the campus will save approximately 9 million gallons per year. Turf conversion signs have been and will continue to be posted at various sites throughout campus.

These efforts complement the steps UC San Diego has already taken to significantly reduce water usage. Some of these steps include:

- Decreasing overall water use by 20 percent over the next five years
- Being a leader in the use of reclaimed water for landscaping – 30 percent is irrigated with recycled water
- Installing efficient water fixtures and irrigation equipment
- Reducing watering schedules campus wide
- Ensuring that new construction and renovations meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards
- Converting the Central Utility Plant to a recycled water system, which will save the campus an estimated 150 million gallons of potable water annually once completed.

Once all projects are completed, potable water consumption on campus could be reduced by approximately 200 million gallons per year.

“Making changes in how we operate, both as a campus and as individuals, is essential if we are to face the water challenges ahead,” said Matthews. “Together, we can continue to make progress in conserving one of our most important resources.”

To learn more about water conservation measures at UC San Diego, visit sustainability.ucsd.edu. If you see a water leak on campus, report it online at wsc@ucsd.edu or call the Facilities Management Customer Relations Help Desk at (858) 534-2930. Learn more water saving tips at www.WasteNoWater.org.

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