

Water Conservation

Water is a natural resource that can either be readily or scarcely available depending on geography and climatic conditions. Water must be drawn from the environment, treated, and distributed across a network before it can be utilized at our businesses and homes. Even in water rich areas, the process of water collection, treatment, and distribution can be environmentally and financially taxing. Water conservation is considered a best practice in sustainability due to its positive impact on the environment and putting less stress on streams and groundwater that supply our water needs. Conserving water at your property will also benefit you financially by reducing water utility bills. The less you use, the less you pay for!

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Financial savings. Water bills vary considerably depending on location/user rates and volume consumed. Properties that consume a large volume of water – like hotels and restaurants – are great candidates for lowering utility bills through instituting water conservation measures. Unlike some other sustainability initiatives, these savings should be seen on your next billing cycle! *Tip:* Because water conservation savings are seen so quickly, keep track of savings seen through water conservation measures and put these funds toward other sustainability projects.

Reduce your water footprint. Water is a valuable natural resource even in water-rich areas. By instituting water conservation measures, you and your business will lower your water footprint and be responsible stewards of the environment.

Market to guests and discuss with staff. Signs encouraging water conservation behaviors or other visible indicators of water conservation tactics provide an opportunity to discuss sustainability with guests and staff. Encourage guests and staff to ask about water conservation measures and take the opportunity to talk about the environmental and financial benefits of conserving water.

THIS GUIDE IS APPLICABLE...

FOR

- ✓ Food & Beverage
- ✓ Travel & Tourism
- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Recreation

TO

- ✓ Management
- ✓ Event Planning
- ✓ Food Operations
- ✓ Housekeeping
- ✓ Maintenance & Operations
- ✓ Front of the House

BEST PRACTICES

- 1 Collect and monitor as much data as possible.** A key to reducing water usage is to understand where and when water is used most frequently. This will allow you to pinpoint solutions that work for you and reduce water effectively. Look at water usage and pull out any seasonal trends, which might indicate exterior water usage or landscape irrigation. Consider sub-metering the property to get information about what areas of a property use the most water and provide the best opportunity for intervention.
- 2 Create a water management plan.** After analyzing water usage seasonally and across your property, it is important to develop a water management plan. A water management plan can contain goals around water conservation and include methods to train staff and communicate to guests what your water saving goals are. For more information, see [Water Management Practice #1: Water Management Planning](#).
- 3 Monitor plumbing routinely and fix leaks quickly.** Leaky plumbing fixtures are a common problem. While a small drip might not look like much, this waste can add up – an average household's leaks can account for 10,000 gallons of water every year. Make sure that plumbing is monitored routinely, and leaks are fixed once called to your attention to avoid water waste. Other plumbing problems, like a clogged drain or toilet, should also be addressed as soon as possible.
- 4 Consider low-flow water fixtures.** There are a variety of low-flow fixtures available, including showerheads, toilets, and sinks. Consider the pros and cons of low-flow water fixtures and whether any of these options are a good fit for your business, including the financial and environmental savings and the quality of the product. Water-efficient products can be found through the [WaterSense website](#) from the US Environmental Protection agency. WaterSense fixtures are tested for energy efficiency and performance. We recommend beginning with replacing shower heads, as the payback period on water saved through these upgrades is quick.
- 5 Post signs encouraging behavior that conserves water.** Staff and guests can be reminded of ways to responsibly use water that conserves the resource. For example, encourage guests to turn the water off while brushing their teeth at a hotel, or staff to turn the sink off when not using it while washing dishes at a restaurant. Another popular method to reduce water usage at hotels is to encourage guests to reuse linens during their stay.

BEST PRACTICES

- 6 Practice low water landscaping methods.** Landscaping can account for a huge amount of the water used at a property. Select sites and plants for landscaping that require less supplemental water – you can reduce outdoor water usage by up to 50% through selective usage of native, drought-tolerant plants and considering where to put them. If using a water feature such as a fountain, consider those that provide co-benefits like stormwater management or that use smaller pumps to reduce the amount of water required to keep them running. If utilizing irrigation, consider installing a rain sensor to save money and the mental anguish caused by sprinklers running during a thunderstorm. Also, pay attention to the time of day chosen for irrigation and try to limit this to around sunrise or sunset to avoid rapid evaporation. Finally, do not use water as the primary means for cleaning outdoors and opt for sweeping debris instead. For more information, see the [Water Efficiency Management Guide – Landscaping and Irrigation](#).

RESOURCES

Environmental Protection Agency

- [H2Otel Challenge](#)
- [WaterSense Best Management Practices](#)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

- [Water Conservation](#)

Department of Energy

- [Best Management Practices for Water Efficiency](#)