

# The Conservation Team

## Water Conservation Program



### The Challenge

For more than a century, the Edwards Aquifer has supplied San Antonio with pure spring water. In the early '90s, the Federal courts and the Texas Legislature established limits on our primary water supply. After years of discussion and inaction, the community united to address critical water supply issues.

Water conservation was immediately identified as a way to address both short- and long-term water needs. So how does a community change from water careless to water careful? It wasn't any one thing, rather the synergy that comes from the excitement of a new agency, a worthy goal, adequate funding and a community given the tools to enthusiastically join the Conservation Team.

### The Solution

To help foster ideas and identify opportunities that would ultimately result in successful conservation programs, San Antonio Water System established the Community Conservation Committee (CCC). The CCC is made up of people representing a variety of interests, including businesses, building owners, facility managers, hospitals, hotels, schools, entertainment facilities, industrial manufacturers, builders and developers, neighborhood associations, civic and environmental groups.

With a service population reaching 1.3 million people, SAWS from the beginning recognized that a significant community ownership of conservation in San Antonio was required for program success. We refer to it as the Conservation Team, and the CCC is at the core of this team. As a direct result of their commitment to conservation, San Antonio is a conservation success.

### Case Study: Conservation Ordinance

San Antonio has made significant progress in reducing per capita water use from a high of 225 gallons a day in the mid-1980s to a dry-year low of 136 gallons a day, with a final goal of 116 gallons a day by 2016.

As we move to further reduce our per capita water use, reductions become more difficult to achieve. Greater innovation in policy and technology is required to drop and sustain those last few gallons. Provisions in the Conservation Ordinance are designed to assist the community in reaching this goal without significantly impacting the quality of life for the community.

This ordinance was strongly supported by a majority of individuals and stakeholder groups (more than 100) that commented at events and on the website, as well as through articles published in the *San Antonio Express-News*.

Support from individuals and businesses directly affected by the ordinance is a testament to the commitment of the entire community, from environmental groups to irrigators, builders, developers and manufacturers — all of them are now part of the Conservation Team.