

Multiplying the Savings:

Implementing The City of Atlanta Multifamily Toilet Rebate Program

Challenges:

- 108,000 multifamily units (of 168,000 total) built prior to 1993
- Many units have toilets that use 3.5, 5.5, even 7 gpf
- Highest water bills in the nation
- High concentrations of poverty (25 percent of total population)
- Encouraging conservation where there is little to no submetering
- Providing meaningful long-term relief to multifamily property owners



A Little History:

Tri-State Water Wars

For the past 20+ years, the state of Georgia has been involved in litigation with Alabama and Florida re: water distribution from Lake Lanier and Lake Allatoona, Federally constructed reservoirs located in Georgia.

"Questions about the future allocation of the water resources from these basins have given rise to the so-called 'tri-state water wars.'" (Southern Environmental Law Center, http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/tri_state_water_wars_al_ga_fl/tri_state_water_wars_background/). In brief, the reservoirs (and their associated dams) were constructed for the stated purposes of "flood control, hydropower and navigation"; water supply was not a directly stated purpose when the reservoirs were built. Years later, when population growth in all three states had expanded dramatically, the Army Corps of Engineers began releasing more water for general consumption purposes, but particularly for the now population-rich Metro Atlanta area. "The Corps began issuing contracts to municipal water-supply providers without any evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)." (http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/tri_state_water_wars_al_ga_fl/tri_state_water_wars_background/). These actions prompted Alabama to sue the Corp of Engineers; Florida and Georgia eventually joined the litigation.

Add to this the fact that the Metro Atlanta Region (whose Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District includes 15 counties and 90 cities) has a comparatively tiny watershed per population.

Although recent Court decisions have been in Georgia's favor, recognizing Lake Lanier as a water-supply source for the state, cyclical drought and population growth continue to pose significant challenges for water providers.

Water Conservation Moves to the Forefront

Uncertainty related to the "Water Wars" and a severe drought in Georgia led State legislators to consider the benefits of water conservation. In 2010, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue signed the Georgia Water Stewardship Act (see separate box), which requires high-efficiency plumbing fixtures in all new construction as of July 1, 2012.

On December 2, 2010, The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (The District) issued an addendum to its District Water Supply and Conservation Management Plan which called for the establishment of multifamily HET rebate programs throughout the District. The City of Atlanta's Department of Watershed Management (DWM) rolled out its multifamily rebate program in October, 2010 – becoming both the first utility in the District to do so and the "guinea pig" for this portion of the Management Plan.



Georgia Water Stewardship Act (plumbing fixtures)

New construction (as of July 1, 2012) must have:

- 1.28 gpf or less toilets
- .5 gpf or less urinals
- 2.0 gpm faucet aerators
- 2.5 gpm showerheads



Program Procedure and Requirements:

- Property built prior to 1993
- Existing toilets use more than 1.6 gallons per flush
- Pre-installation toilet inspection by DWM
- Property owner/manager is up-to-date on water bill payments
- Property owner/manager purchases all fixtures and has them installed
- Property owner/manager provides proof of purchase for 1.28 gpf or less WaterSense replacement toilets
- Property owner/manager recycles old toilets at one of two porcelain recyclers in the Atlanta area (documentation from recycler required)
- Post-installation toilet inspection by DWM
- Property owner/manager completes a multifamily toilet rebate application (which includes all documentation listed above)
- Rebate (\$100 per qualifying toilet) is applied to property's water account



Funding:

The City of Atlanta's Department of Watershed Management (DWM) set aside \$1M from its capital fund for toilet rebate programs in 2007. This funding source was used originally for single-family toilet rebates but was extended to the multifamily toilet rebate program in 2010. We have received additional funding for this program as of the 2012-2013 DWM budget cycle: \$1 million for both our multifamily and single-family residential toilet rebate programs.



Achievements:

As of August 17, 2012:

- 2685 toilets retrofitted in 39 properties
- \$268,500 in rebate funding disbursed (\$100 per toilet).
- 28.1 million gallons of water conserved
- 67 tons of porcelain recycled.



Staffing:

There are four people on our water conservation staff: all assist with pre- and post-installation inspections. The environmental program manager is responsible for implementing/managing the Multifamily Toilet Rebate. She communicates directly with customers, maintains all records, schedules/implements pre- and post-installation inspections, and applies rebate funds to participating properties' water accounts. We receive additional assistance with inspections from our Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) inspection unit.

Launching and Promoting the Program:

The Multifamily Toilet Rebate Program was launched in October, 2010, during the City of Atlanta's Sustainability Week. On the day devoted to water issues, DWM invited our recycling partners, representatives from a local apartment management organization, rainwater harvesting representatives, high-efficiency toilet manufacturers, and other groups interested in water conservation to exhibit their products/services in our City Hall Atrium. Our DWM Commissioner delivered a short address that introduced the Multifamily Toilet Rebate Program, and our staff distributed information to attendees.

To further promote the program, we posted information on our web site, ran articles in our monthly water bill insert, discussed the program at neighborhood meetings, and sent eblasts to our multifamily customer list.



Toilet GPF Comparisons:

7 gallons per flush	5.5 gallons per flush	3.5 gallons per flush	1.28 gallons per flush
7 gallons x 5 flushes a day = 35 gallons per day	5.5 gallons x 5 flushes a day = 27.5 gallons per day	3.5 gallons x 5 flushes a day = 17.5 gallons per day	1.28 gallons x 5 flushes a day = 6.4 gallons per day
245 gallons per week	192.5 gallons per week	122.5 gallons per week	44.8 gallons per week
1050 gallons per month	825 gallons per month	525 gallons per month	192 gallons per month