

# Community engagement + support

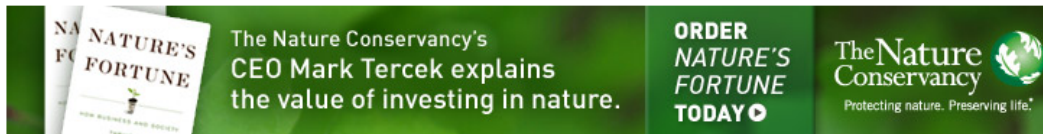
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Program Manager



Alliance *for* Water Efficiency

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## More than Three-Quarters of Americans Don't Know Where Their Water Comes From

New Nature Conservancy Poll Illustrates Disconnect Between People and Nature



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Arlington, VA | March 22, 2011

Today, on World Water Day, [The Nature Conservancy](#) released the results of a new poll that shows an overwhelming majority of [Americans don't know where their water comes from](#).

Excluding those who reported receiving well water:

- Approximately 77% could not accurately identify the natural source of the water used in their homes.
- Well over half immediately declined to hazard a guess.
- Just 50% of those claiming to know the source of their water could correctly identify it.

"In the United States, we have the luxury of not having to know where our water comes from, and that luxury has created a disconnect between people and nature," explains Jeff Opperman, senior freshwater scientist at The Nature Conservancy. "Over the past two hundred years, we've built ourselves a sophisticated public water system that brings water from rivers, lakes and aquifers right into our homes. As far as many Americans can tell, their water comes from the tap."

While that may technically be true, that tap water originates from nature. Eighty percent of the water we use as a nation comes from rivers and lakes.\* The rest comes from groundwater supplies, most of which are recharged by the lands above them.

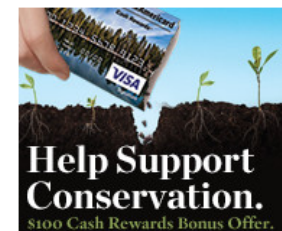
But many communities are making short-sighted choices about how we use and protect these precious resources, and as a result, they're facing a number of consequences—from water shortages to higher water treatment costs. Nationally, public funding for conserving our water-cleaning forests, grasslands and floodplains is being decimated. Currently, 90 percent of the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) is on the chopping block.

### Contact information

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### Related Links

- [Discover where your water comes from.](#)
- [Watch: Where does your water come from?](#)





# 2015 AWWA State of the WATER INDUSTRY Report



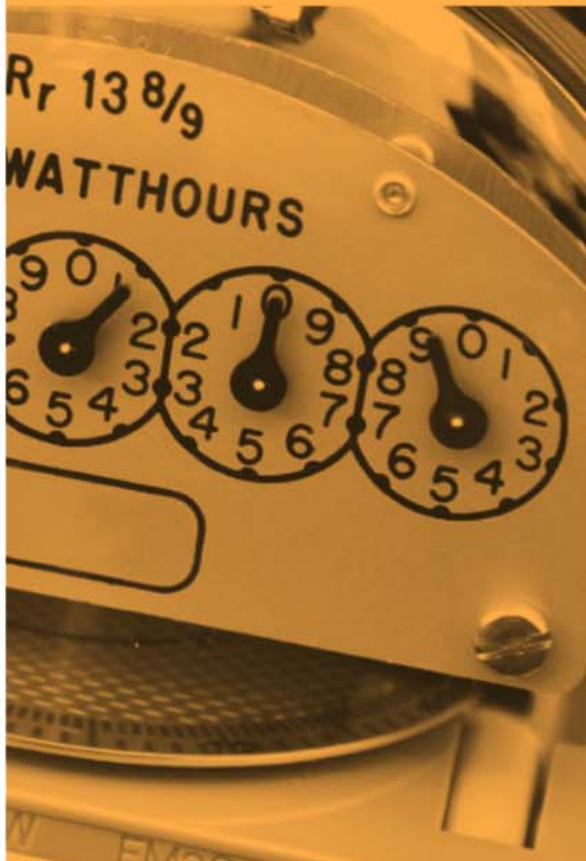
American Water Works  
Association

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“72% percent of respondents felt the general public has a poor or very poor understanding of water systems and services”

“61% felt the general public has a poor or very poor understanding of water resources”



**FACT SHEET**

# Managing Financial Challenges of the Future Through Strategic Communication

## QUICK FACTS

- Communication fosters good relationships with customers, boards, and partners
- Informed customers are more likely to be satisfied customers
- It is important to communicate the value of water
- Good communication is a 2-way dialogue with customers

## OVERVIEW

Communication between the water utility and its customers is important because it can serve as a tool to help a water utility plan and manage for future challenges and conditions. Some of the ways utilities can use communication include knowing what their customers want; maintaining

good relationships with their governing board or council; and creating alliances with other organizations (Means 2001). In addition, it is very important for water utilities to be engaged in the community, working with stakeholders to improve water system management (Means et al. 2006).

## IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Water utilities communicate to promote and support the wise use of water; build confidence in the water utility; provide for and encourage prudent, long-term investment in water resources and water service; build customer support for rate increases; and obtain the financial resources required to effectively and efficiently accomplish the utility's mission.

Proactively communicating to inform or educate can affect customer satisfaction. For instance,

Home • Tools • Communications Tools

**Building Better Water Rates for an Uncertain World**

**AWE Sales Forecasting and Rate Model**

**Rate Model User Guide**

**Appendices: Costing Methods, Demand Forecasting and Revenue Modeling**

**Communications Tools**

**RATES HANDBOOK**  
Building Better Rates for an Uncertain World

## Communications Tools

Introducing a new rate structure or a rate change requires good communications to stakeholders, including elected officials, customers, community groups, and others. In many cases, water managers must respond to questions about why rates may be rising while customers are being asked to use less. Customer understanding of water service and the role of water utilities is vital to garnering support for needed investments in infrastructure and system improvements. AWE has developed resources to help utilities engage stakeholders in a productive dialogue:

**Water Rates Messaging Plan:** This set of key messages can help water managers or water board officials communicate to ratepayers simply and clearly about the following issues:

- The service and value water utilities provide
- The need for a rate revision or new rate structure
- The relationship between conservation and rates
- The impact of drivers such as drought or water quality issues

[Download the AWE Water Rates Messaging Plan](#)

**Message Protocol and Q&A:** This document provides guidance on using the Water Rates Message Plan, and provides sample Q&As for utility use.

[Download the AWE Message Protocol and Q&A](#)

**Water: What You Pay For**

This short video explains the least customers should know about the water that they not only love, but need to survive! It describes the water service a typical residential water bill covers, and the costs of

**Water: What You Pay For**

AWE

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- 1** Images and stories are powerful communication tools. Source: USFPA
- 2** Images of water systems can help communicate the need for investment or replacement. Source: USFPA
- 3** Messages should be clear and concise. Source: amwater.com

## Water Efficiency Committee

[Committees](#) » [Water Efficiency Committee](#)

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### Welcome to the Water Efficiency Committee

In line with National AWWA goals, the Illinois Section American Water Works Association (ISAWWA) [Water Efficiency Committee](#) will provide resources and educational materials for implementing and maintaining a water efficiency program at the municipal and utility level in addition to offering information about local water use to the general public, schools, and officials. Interested in the Illinois Section AWWA Water Efficiency Committee and what we are doing? Email: Danielle Gallet, [dgallet@metroplanning.org](mailto:dgallet@metroplanning.org)

### [Water Efficiency Committee Forum](#) (link)

*To access forum you need to be a member and login.*

### Committee Objectives

The Committee has four objective areas:

1. [Communication, Education and Legislation](#): The committee will collaborate with other AWWA committees (such as the outreach committee) to ensure the flow of information to all stakeholder groups. Educational seminars will be held periodically to include topics such as water audits, general water supply background information, water efficiency BMPs and benefits, and rate structures. The website will serve as a "clearinghouse" of links, resources, and information. In addition the website will track

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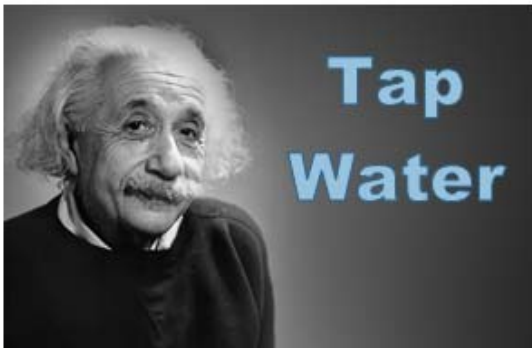
4/15/2016

[Hiring Benefits for Employers to Hire Vets](#)



## Dumb

Bottled water costs more than 200 times as much as tap water, and the plastic bottles generate a significant waste stream. Plus, you have to drive to the store to get it.



## Smart

Tap water has excellent quality, generates very little waste, and is delivered to your house for less than a penny a gallon. You can get more than 200 gallons delivered to your home for the cost of one gallon of bottled water from the store, a great value!

## Treatment and delivery adds value

US consumers use about 100 gallons per person, per day (USGS).

Water utilities have constructed infrastructure to treat water and deliver it to your home, similar to electric, phone, and gas utilities.

Complex water treatment plants remove harmful substances.

Public drinking water is treated in order to provide healthy water, free of contaminants and bacteria. Treatment and pumping processes are energy intensive, resulting in real costs that add value and are passed on to the consumer.

Distribution pipes deliver water directly to your home.

Vast networks of pipes, pumps, and valves result in a reliable system which provides large volumes of pressurized, treated water - directly to your faucet. Operational costs include construction costs, power, and labor; costs which are passed on to you.

Reliable delivery of low cost water is critical for health, safety (fire protection), quality of life (recreation, landscaping), and prosperity (economic development of water-consuming businesses).



### THE BEST DEAL AROUND

On average, a gallon of Illinois tap water costs less than a penny. When compared with the costs of other products we use every day, tap water is clearly one of the best deals around

A GALLON OF	A GALLON OF	A GALLON OF	A GALLON OF	A GALLON OF
				
\$54.00	\$11.00	\$2.00 - \$10.00	\$3.51	\$3.82

(\*Prices based on California averages. The average cost for bottled water varies greatly based on brand and unit size.)



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