



Green to Deep Green Stories

Sample Content Marketing Stories for the Boy Scouts of America's Sustainability Website

WaterSense Means Dollars and Cents for Consumers

“Water, water, everywhere/Nor any drop to drink.” Those familiar words from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s 1798 “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” have a decided urgency today.

Although 70 percent of the Earth’s surface is covered by water, less than 1 percent of the planet’s water is available for human use. According to a 2014 U.S. Government Accountability Office study, 40 of 50 state water managers expect water shortages under average conditions over the next decade. And the pressure will only intensify as the Earth’s population swells from 7 billion in 2012 to 8 billion in 2025.

In other words, water conservation is quickly moving from optional to essential for homes and businesses across America. But knowing where to start can be a challenge.

To help, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency created the WaterSense program in 2006. Much as the EPA’s Energy Star program tags energy-efficient appliances, the WaterSense program makes it easy to find water-efficient products. To earn the WaterSense logo, a product must be proven to use at least 20 percent less water than standard models—and perform at least as well. (There’s no sense buying a toilet that uses 20 percent less water if you must flush it twice to clear the bowl.) Since the program’s inception, WaterSense has helped consumers save a cumulative 1.1 trillion gallons of water and more than \$21.7 billion in water and energy bills.

Currently, the WaterSense program covers tank-type and flushometer-valve toilets, bathroom sink faucets and accessories, showerheads, weather-based irrigation controllers, and commercial pre-rinse irrigation controllers. In the pipeline are standards for water softeners, soil moisture-based control technologies, and landscape irrigation

sprinklers. New homes that are designed to reduce water usage indoors and out can also earn the WaterSense label; the EPA estimates that a WaterSense-labeled home can save a family of four at least 50,000 gallons of water per year, cutting utility costs by up to \$600.

To learn more, visit the WaterSense website at <http://www3.epa.gov/watersense/index.html>. There you can search for certified products, find local rebates, and calculate how much you could save by upgrading your water-wasting toilets, faucets, and irrigation systems.

Keeping Up With the Greens

Keeping up with the Joneses is as American as apple pie. When family members, friends, and neighbors do more and buy more, most of us feel an urge to do the same. A sibling's vacation photos on Facebook get us dreaming of the tropics. A friend's new car reminds realize how ratty our old beater looks. A neighbor's new in-ground pool makes us jealous for something similar—even if we don't like to swim.

But keeping up with the Joneses can do more than boost sales of swimming pools, cars, and vacation packages. It can—at least according to two experiments—boost energy conservation efforts.

Beginning in 2008, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) in California and Puget Sound Energy (PSE) in Washington conducted experiments in which randomly selected customers received reports comparing their energy usage with that of similar homes in the area. Those customers received monthly or quarterly reports that contained both data and messages designed to promote energy conservation. For example, a SMUD report showed a bar graph comparing the customer's energy usage with "efficient neighbors" and "all neighbors," along with a message like this: "Last month you used 35% LESS electricity than your efficient neighbors. Your energy efficiency for the month was: Great!" (A smiley face emphasized this positive message, while a not-so-smiley face accompanied negative messages.)

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, "In both experiments, energy use dropped almost immediately after the mailings went out, suggesting that households were making behavioral rather than durable changes (remembering to turn off lights rather than, say, caulking their windows). Also, in the PSE experiment, where researchers could track daily energy use, the biggest changes came during two-day periods around the weekends, suggesting that reductions occurred because customers were being more mindful of their energy use."

Cost savings were significant. SMUD customers saved \$13 to \$31 per year (depending on whether they received monthly or quarterly reports), while PSE customers saved \$22 to \$25 per year (also depending on the frequency of reports). If all customers had received the reports, SMUD customers would have saved \$15.2 million per year, while PSE customers would have saved \$20.7 million.

Researchers also looked at whether there was a "boomerang" effect—if low-use households increased their usage as a result of the reports. The Sacramento experiment

didn't show such an effect, but the Puget Sound experiment did. However, the 3.4-percent usage increase among homes using the least energy was more than offset by the 6-percent usage decrease among homes using the most energy.

In other words, while many Americans are still trying to keep up with the Jones, smart consumers are trying to keep up with the Greens instead.

To learn more about the research, visit <http://www.nber.org/digest/feb10/w15386.html>. For complete details, visit <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15386>.

Community Gardens Do More Than Grow Vegetables

Everyone wants to save the planet. But imagine if you could save the planet while also fostering a sense of community, providing opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connection, stimulating social interaction, improving people's quality of life, promoting health, encouraging self-reliance, reducing family food expenses, beautifying neighborhoods, creating income opportunities, and helping the poor. (Whew!) That's just what community gardens can do.

Found in cities across the United States, community gardens are open spaces where groups of people come together to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs at little or no cost beyond seeds and sweat. While every community garden is unique, many use a technique called square-foot gardening, where enclosed 4' by 8' beds are divided into 1' by 1' plots. These plots are small but mighty. According to the Healthy Lifestyles Marshfield Area Coalition in Wisconsin, "Square-foot gardening requires 80 percent less space than traditional gardening but may yield five times as much produce as traditional gardens."

The Marshfield coalition opened its first garden site in 2009 on the grounds of First Presbyterian Church (FPC), whose new Green Team was looking for ways to make the church—and the larger community—more sustainable. The coalition now operates gardens at three different sites, offering a total of 80 beds (four of which are elevated for use by gardeners with physical challenges).

In a 2013 interview with *Presbyterians Today* magazine, FPC Green Team member Barb Gillespie described the group's vision. "We have this planet that was provided for us; it's our obligation to take care of it," she said. "It's kind of our ministry to model for others how we've been asked to share our skills and take care of creation on behalf of God."

The garden at First Presbyterian includes 36 beds on previously unused space on the church property. Besides building the beds, the church installed two 250-gallon rain barrels—donated by a company that had previously stored sand in them—and a supplemental 50-gallon barrel. Underground pipes connect the barrels to the garden site. From year to year, Gillespie said, the primary expense is adding fresh compost and occasionally new soil. A \$15 donation per plot is suggested to cover operating costs.

While the Marshfield gardens attract people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, the most important users may be children. In recent years, fourth-graders

at two different schools have adopted plots at two Marshfield gardens, while participants in the YMCA's Healthy Kids summer camp work at the third. As the coalition recently reported, "Children who would normally not experience gardening had a chance to see where their food comes from, not just a grocery store. Weeding and watering a garden encouraged physical activity and taught the kids responsibility and the power of working together. When the fruits and vegetables were ready to be harvested, the children were involved in washing and preparing fresh veggies to eat as a snack. This encouraged children to eat and enjoy foods they would have normally not chosen."

According to one study, such involvement can have a measurable impact on kids' health. In 2013, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine reported that 17 percent of obese or overweight children in schools with gardening programs improved their body mass index scores. (The specific program studied included a weekly gardening session, a seven-week cooking and nutrition workshop, and social events for parents and children.)

Community gardens can have one more important benefit: raising the profile of the groups that host them. FPC also runs a food pantry and clothes closet, and Barb Gillespie noted an overlap with the gardening effort. "Lots of the folks that visit that facility have now started gardening with us," she said. "So they're getting exposure to our church community, and our church community is getting exposure to them and finding ways to create bridges between folks."

Note: While community gardens are easy to run, they can be challenging to set up. The Healthy Lifestyles Marshfield Area Coalition has developed a 40-page guide called "Growing Together Community Garden Toolkit," which may be downloaded for free from <https://www.marshfieldclinic.org/Documents/garden-toolkit-2014-01-31-small.pdf>. Another good resource is the American Community Gardening Association (<https://communitygarden.org/>); established in 1979, ACGA represents 2,100 gardens across North America.

Sustainability 101: Forest Stewardship Council and Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Open an issue of *Scouting* or *Boys' Life* magazine, and you'll find the seal of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Open a copy of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, and you'll find the Forest Stewardship Council seal. So what do these seals mean? And why do they matter to your council?

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) are nonprofit organizations that certify forests that follow environmentally sound practices, such as limiting clearcutting, protecting old-growth trees, reforesting impacted areas, and maintaining ecological functions. They also offer chain-of-custody certifications to ensure that paper products come from sustainably managed forests—hence the seals in *Scouting*, *Boys' Life*, and the *Boy Scout Handbook*.

While practices like reforestation are important, certification is actually much broader, as the organizations' principles show:

Sustainable Forestry Initiative	Forest Stewardship Council
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Forestry 2. Forest Productivity and Health 3. Protection of Water Resources 4. Protection of Biological Diversity 5. Aesthetics and Recreation 6. Protection of Special Sites 7. Responsible Fiber Sourcing Practices in North America 8. Legal Compliance 9. Research 10. Training and Education 11. Community Involvement and Social Responsibility 12. Transparency 13. Continual Improvement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compliance with Laws and FSC Principles 2. Tenure and Use Rights and Responsibilities 3. Indigenous Peoples' Rights 4. Community Relations and Worker's Rights 5. Benefits from the Forest 6. Environmental Impact 7. Management Plan 8. Monitoring and Assessment 9. Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests 10. Plantations

For many councils, logging on camp properties is both a source of income and an important forest-management tool. While there are direct and indirect costs to becoming certified, your council could benefit from greater access to markets and a price premium from some buyers. You can also ensure that you're practicing what you preach to the Scouts who use your facilities. (Note: Philmont Scout Ranch is certified to the SFI standard.)

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has developed a handy guide to forest certification. Written from the forest owner's perspective, it provides a detailed overview of SFI, FSC, and two other certification programs: the American Tree Farm System and Green Tag Forestry. You can download it at <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/an-introduction-to-forest-certification>.

Making Sustainability Pay Off Now

For many Scout councils, the biggest downside to sustainability is the upfront cost. They know sustainability is the right thing to do and they know monetary savings will mount up over the long term, but none of that matters when this year's budget is tight.

Take the example of low-flow toilets. Say you replace a functional 4-gpf (gallon per flush) toilet at your service center with a 1.6-gpf toilet that costs \$150. Assuming you're spending \$2 per 1,000 gallons of water (about the U.S. average, according to the

Environmental Protection Agency) and assuming the new toilet is flushed 20 times a day, you'll save \$35.04 per year on your water bill, which means you won't start seeing cost savings for 4.28 years. (Place the same toilet at a camp with mostly weekend and summer usage, and the time horizon lengthens.)

But some sustainability measures pay off faster—much, much faster.

A few years ago, Chesebrough Scout Reservation near San Jose, Calif., didn't have a dishwasher in its dining hall, so it had to rely on disposable plates, cups and utensils. Under the leadership of properties chairman George Denise (whose day job is director of sustainability at Oracle's headquarters), the camp invested in a high-efficiency dishwasher—at a cost of about \$2,800—and \$500 worth of reusable plastic plates, plastic cups, and stainless-steel utensils.

So what return has the camp seen on its investment? "It saves us about \$2,000 a year in solid-waste hauling fees and also saves us between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a year in buying paper products," Denise says. "It's actually a huge savings." (Since the camp has its own water and septic systems, the water bill is not an issue.)

In other words, the first-year cost of \$3,300 was basically offset by cost savings. And since that cost won't be repeated—aside from replacing cups that break and utensils that land in the trash—the camp should enjoy annual savings of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per year for the foreseeable future.

What could your camp do with an extra few thousand dollars this year?