



# CASE STUDY - MUNICIPAL REBATE PROGRAM SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

## OVERVIEW

San Diego County’s arid Mediterranean climate contributes to its beauty, popularity and unfortunately, to its limited water supply. Regardless of the weather, California’s second largest county must import most of their water from faraway sources. Drought conditions and a state mandate to reduce usage 20% by 2020 make it essential that residents, municipalities, and nonprofits view ‘water-use efficiency’ as a civic duty. [Live WaterSmart](#) is not just a slogan in San Diego County; it is a way of life. In 2015, the [San Diego County Department of Public Works](#) began a collaboration with the [Solana Center for Environmental Innovation](#) and [Rain Water Solutions](#) to encourage water harvesting through a rain barrel rebate program. With no funding to promote or manage the sale, residents were offered rebates to purchase ‘Ivy’ 50-gallon rain barrels and municipalities/nonprofits partnered on distribution events. This creative approach was successful; over 2,000 ‘Ivy’ rain barrels were sold to San Diego County residents in 2015.



## ACTION

In 2015 [San Diego County’s Department of Public Work’s Watershed Protection Program](#) partnered with [Rain Water Solutions](#) and [Solana Center](#), a nonprofit organization for environmental innovation. The group’s goal was to offer residents affordable rain barrels and hold distribution events at different locations within the county. Without the benefit of funding for marketing, subsidies, or event management a simple three-tiered approach was used to manage the program:

- 1) Offer San Diego County residents a \$75 rebate per rain barrel – allow up to four rain barrels per household
- 2) Use social media, municipalities, nonprofits, and special interest groups to spread the word about the sale
- 3) Ask municipalities and nonprofits to volunteer resources and locations for rain barrel distribution events

Rain Water Solutions provided San Diego County and the Solana Center with a streamlined, customized approach for sales, rebates, and distribution. Program organizers received marketing tools, a dedicated customer website, and the onsite event support they needed to overcome obstacles and meet objectives. The county’s residents were able to learn about the benefits of water harvesting and use a secure e-commerce site to order ‘Ivy’ rain barrels at a price significantly less than retail. Residents picked up their purchase at one of the rain barrel distribution events held throughout the county.

## RESULTS

- In 2015, San Diego County residents purchased 2,000+ ‘Ivy’ 50-gallon rain barrels – 1,700+ were sold in just six weeks!
- The majority of the residents applied for the Metropolitan Water Districts rebate and 80% of orders were for four rain barrels.
- The Solana Center received \$10.00 from the sale of each rain barrel – proceeds support their mission of promoting environmental awareness throughout communities in San Diego county.
- Due to popular demand, additional distribution events are planned in 2016.

*“This is the first time I have purchased and used rain barrels and I bought three.”*  
— San Diego County Resident

*“Thank you for the rebate program. Couldn’t afford it otherwise.”*  
— San Diego County Resident

<p><b><i>In a survey of San Diego County Residents/Customers</i></b></p> <p><b>77%</b> bought a rain barrel for the first time</p> <p><b>84%</b> bought a rain barrel to conserve water</p> <p><b>64%</b> bought to take advantage of the rebate offer</p> <p><b>98%</b> were likely to continue using their rain barrel</p> <p><b>96%</b> were satisfied with the ordering &amp; distribution process</p>
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*“Thanks for the great work coordinating with Solana Center for the rain barrel sales events. We are really pleased with the public response and with all you’ve done. This was a great program and a fantastic success!”*  
— Marsha Cook, Environmental Specialist - Watershed Protection Program, County of San Diego

Learn more about Rain Water Solutions and how to start a rain barrel distribution programs at [rainwatersolutions.com](http://rainwatersolutions.com).