



CASE STUDY - NONPROFIT REBATE PROGRAM SOLANA CENTER – SAN DEIGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

OVERVIEW

San Diego County’s arid Mediterranean climate contributes to its beauty, popularity and unfortunately, to its limited water supply. 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. For over 30 years, the [Solana Center for Environmental Innovation](#) has been a champion of community-based conservation programs that now reach over 10,000 San Diego County residents per year. That is why the [San Diego County Department of Public Works](#) began a collaboration with the Solana Center and [Rain Water Solutions](#) to create a rain barrel rebate program to promote water harvesting. With no budget for sales, marketing, or distribution, the Solana Center receives a portion from the sale of every ‘Ivy’ rain barrel to support their mission and offset costs. This creative approach has been a successful partnership; in 2015 over 2,000 ‘Ivy’ rain barrels were sold to San Diego County residents.



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 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
- 4) Ensure the Solana Center receives \$10 from the sale of each ‘Ivy’ rain barrel

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 of those 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

In a survey of San Diego County Residents/Customers

- 77%** bought a rain barrel for the first time
- 84%** bought a rain barrel to conserve water
- 64%** bought to take advantage of the rebate offer
- 98%** were likely to continue using their rain barrel
- 96%** were satisfied with the ordering & distribution process

“Thanks for all of the great work coordinating with Solana Center for the Rain barrel sales events. We are really pleased with the public response... I am really pleased with all you’ve done for us, 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.