Colorado Springs Utilities

6.5 BILLION GALLONS SAVED

20% REDUCTION

A Thirst for Conservation: Colorado Springs is a growing community that relies on melting snow from the Rockies to fill its city reservoirs. Colorado Springs has experienced a severe drought for much of the last decade. Mild winters and hot summers decreased the snowpack in surrounding mountain regions, a serious problem for our client, Colorado Springs Utilities.

It's Only Water, Right?: For most Americans, water is utterly taken for granted. The same was true in Colorado Springs. You turn on the faucet. Water comes out. End of story.

To Science or Not to Science?: The underlying causes of the water crisis were clear to Colorado Springs Utilities. The city was caught between two opposing forces: urban growth and shrinking precipitation. We could try to communicate the mechanics of these forces while hammering home conservation messages. But would it work? We thought not.

Water Conservation. This Time, It's Personal: We decided to use real Colorado Springs citizens to communicate our conservation message. To connect with the public, we used firefighters, lifeguards and other professionals whose livelihoods depend directly on water. This gave the problem a human face and modeled behavior to curb the problem.

Thinking Outside The Airways: In addition to broadcast media, we placed informational materials in hotel rooms encouraging guests to re-use towels at least once. We placed messaging in public event centers, malls, restaurants, bars and even bathrooms to encourage water-conscious behaviors.

Six Billion Gallons Don't Lie: At the end of the first year, the campaign yielded a net water savings of over six billion gallons. That's billion, with a "b." Since then, the community has continued to see a 20-percent per capita reduction in water usage. At the latest measure we are still saving over 6.5 billion gallons a year. This sustained success indicates that new habits and new norms have formed – exactly the result we were hoping for, a permanent behavior change that benefits the entire community.