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March Water Matters

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Water Matters



Reid Park, irrigated by reclaimed water

Ahead of the Curve on Water Reuse

Utilities nationwide are rallying behind a simple but powerful idea known as One Water: use all water wisely and waste none. This approach looks at all water – groundwater, surface water, recycled water, and stormwater – as part of one connected system. Water leaders know that this framework will help communities build resilience and face any future challenges.

In Tucson, that future arrived in 1984 when Tucson Water became one of the first utilities in the nation to invest in a reclaimed water system. The approach was forward-thinking: diversify the water supply, reuse water when possible, and empower customers to conserve. Together, these strategies embody One Water.

"The key is using the right water for the right use," says Tucson Water Director John Kmiec. "As a community, we asked a simple question decades ago: Why are we watering grass with drinking water or mined groundwater? If treated wastewater can be safely reused, why not use it more than once?"

Over four decades, our reclaimed water system has expanded to meet irrigation needs for parks, schools, and golf courses across Tucson – saving about 4.7 billion gallons of drinking water every year and ensuring high-quality drinking water is available for the right use in your home or business.

The City of Tucson | Tucson Water continues to innovate new ways to expand reclaimed

water use. By listening to customers and community partners, the utility identified new ways to connect available resources with new customers, including businesses and industry. This collaborative work helped shape Tucson's One Water 2100 Plan, approved by the City of Tucson's Mayor and City Council in 2023.

Advanced Water Purification (AWP) is the next step in Tucson's water reuse program – using multiple layers of treatment and strict oversight, this process produces ultra-clean water that meets or exceeds drinking-water standards. Communities across the U.S. and around the world already use this proven technology to strengthen local water supplies and plan for the future.

Together, these efforts are part of Tucson's long-term water strategy – helping the community use local resources, meet growing demand, and stay resilient.

Learn how water reuse fits into Tucson's One Water 2100 Plan.





Green stormwater infrastructure project on Pantano, installed by Storm to Shade

Repurposing Stormwater in Tucson

Tucson Water's Storm to Shade (S2S) program is a great example of what "water reuse" can look like beyond the tap. Instead of letting valuable stormwater rush off our streets and disappear into storm drains, Storm to Shade captures rainfall and urban runoff and puts it to work close to where it falls.

That water becomes the primary irrigation source for native Sonoran Desert trees and plants, helping them thrive in our hot, dry climate relying less on potable water, or even without it. As vegetation matures, it returns the favor many times over, providing much-needed shade, cooling yards and sidewalks, refreshing the air, creating habitat for birds and pollinators, and beautifying public spaces.

It's a simple but powerful idea: use local water to support local landscapes, while making Tucson more livable and climate resilient. S2S demonstrates how thoughtful design turns a liability – stormwater – into a community asset that conserves potable water, improves resilience, and enhances Tucson's unique desert landscape.

A recent example of this approach can be seen along South 12th Avenue, where a newly completed Storm to Shade project is transforming how the street functions for everyone who uses it. Working in collaboration with the City of Tucson's Department of Transportation and Mobility, the project replaced a vehicle travel lane with green stormwater infrastructure designed to slow, spread, and infiltrate stormwater. The result is a corridor that not only manages runoff more effectively, but also improves safety for

a corridor that not only manages runoff more effectively, but also improves safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. New curb extensions, basins, and plantings calm traffic, enhance visibility, and create a greener streetscape that benefits the surrounding community. It's a win-win: safer streets, smarter water use, and a cooler, more inviting South 12th Avenue.

[Learn more about S2S](#)

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Simply load up items you no longer need and drop them off from your car – quick, safe, and eco-friendly.

Email CutPollution@pima.gov

Saturday, March 28th.

[Learn More](#)

Catalina United Methodist Church

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Water Matters is a monthly newsletter brought to you by Tucson Water

Tucson Water is a department of the City of Tucson



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