

Establishing Pilot Programs to Support Environmental Water Needs

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Background:

Meeting environmental water needs requires innovative strategies. Riparian areas in the Southwest have been lost or degraded in the last hundred years, and many riparian enhancement projects have insecure or insufficient water supplies (Ohmart and Anderson, 1986; Megdal, LaCroix, and Schwarz, 2006). Public interest in preserving and enhancing riparian areas has increased (Katz, 2006).

The basic Conserve to Enhance program offers water customers the option of donating money they save through water conservation to a fund that purchases water supplies for environmental enhancement projects (see Poster 1).

Objective:

This project explores the implementation of innovative community-based programs to provide water for the environment and provides a framework for communities interested in initiating this type of program.

- (1) Conduct a review of existing check-box programs to identify critical elements for successful implementation of a program to pay for water for the environment. *Poster 1*
- (2) Continue stakeholder outreach to pursue implementation of a Conserve to Enhance program. *Poster 2*

Stakeholder Outreach

The Conserve to Enhance mechanism was the outgrowth of several years of study, which involved significant stakeholder involvement. This project has had stakeholder involvement since the start of the 2006 study of environmental enhancement projects. Stakeholders were involved throughout study development, through workshops in Tucson and in Phoenix in 2007. Outreach efforts were expanded starting in the spring of 2008 to identify levels of interest in implementing a pilot program. The Conserve to Enhance concept has been presented to several regional and national audiences and at two interactive, half-day workshops in Arizona communities.

Stakeholder Feedback

Benefits:
Value of program as educational tool
May invigorate existing water conservation programs

Concerns:
Reduced flexibility in managing water use
Lost revenues from reduced demand
Increased competition for limited supplies

In combination with reviews of existing check-box programs, stakeholder feedback influenced the development of a framework for successful implementation of a program to pay for water for the environment (Figure 3).

Next Steps

Build partnerships – Existing enhancement projects; involve utility

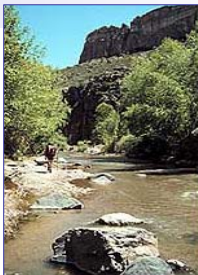
Identify funding sources

Evaluate interest

Design pilot programs

- Selection of accounting mechanism will influence participation levels
- Establish representative oversight body
- Determine program goals

While the issues that have emerged from past stakeholder outreach may be useful in identifying key elements of success for program designs, other issues may emerge during future implementation activities. Many elements of a program to pay for water for the environment are sensitive to the local situation. Thus, exploration of additional ideas and concerns with local stakeholders may be a necessary first step in implementing a Conserve to Enhance program.



Santa Cruz River, North Simpson – Effluent/Groundwater



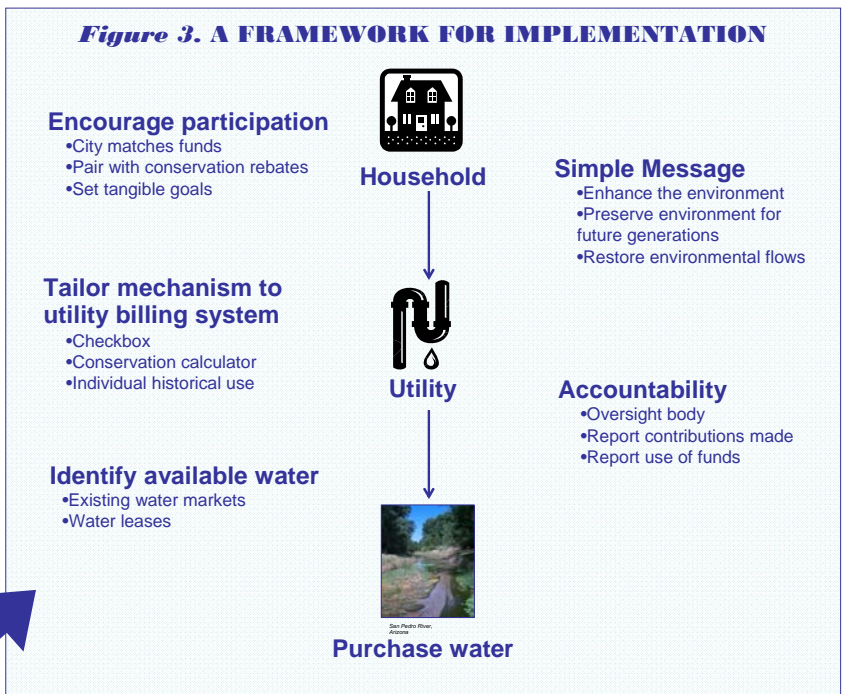
Rio Salado Phoenix – Groundwater dependent



Esperanza Ranch, Arizona – Mix of sources



Figure 3. A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION



References:

Katz, D., 2006. Going With the Flow: Preserving and Restoring Instream Water Allocations. *The World's Water: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources* (P. Gleick, editor). Island Press, Washington.

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Public Survey

We are developing a public survey to evaluate interest in a program to pay for water for the environment and receive feedback on program designs from a broader audience.

Please take a moment to review the draft survey and provide your comments on the content of the survey. Please consider specifically whether you think the listed questions will allow respondents to share their support for and ideas about this type of program in a meaningful way.