



**ASSOCIATION OF  
METROPOLITAN  
WATER AGENCIES**



**Orange Water and Sewer Authority**

*A public, non-profit agency providing water,  
sewer and reclaimed water services  
to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.*

**NEWS RELEASE**    **October 27, 2014**

## **OWASA receives national award for sustainable water utility management**

OWASA recently received a Sustainable Water Utility Management Award from the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA).

AMWA is an organization of largest publicly-owned drinking water suppliers in the U.S. The Sustainable Water Utility Management awards recognize utilities committed to innovation and success in economic, social and environmental aspects of their services.

AMWA recognized:

that OWASA's "...aggressive water conservation program and implementation of a reclaimed water system have reduced the community's risk of droughts, enabled the utility to defer expensive capacity expansion projects, improved its water supply resiliency and redundancy, and reduced its energy use and carbon footprint.

"Efficiency improvements have been implemented throughout the organization following treatment process optimization studies, business process reviews and deployment of information technology solutions.

"A comprehensive asset management program provides timely, accurate information on which to base important investment decisions, and comprehensive watershed management plans protect the quality of water supplies."

"AMWA awards recognize the serious commitment and significant progress these award-winning drinking water agencies are making toward long-term viability through innovative management practices, executive leadership and employee engagement," said AMWA President Chuck M. Murray, General Manager, Fairfax Water. "Sustainable communities cannot exist without sustainable water systems, and these award winners are invaluable assets to their communities and their customers."

John Young, Chair of the OWASA Board, said "The OWASA Board and staff are extremely grateful to our customers in the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community for their strong support of water conservation and sustainability, and for the resources which enable us to pursue excellence in our services and projects."

## **Additional background information**

### **Reduced drinking water demand**

Water conservation by OWASA customers and use of reclaimed water resulted in a 26% reduction in drinking water use from Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 to 2013, despite a 27 percent increase in the number of customer accounts over that same period.

Average water sales in FY 2013 were at the same level as in the early 1990s, although OWASA has about 60% more customer accounts than twenty years ago. These savings translate to similar reductions in the use of chemicals and energy for water treatment.

### **Reclaimed Water System**

After the record drought of 2001-02, OWASA and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill evaluated the technical, economic, and environmental feasibility of using reclaimed water to meet certain non-drinking water needs on the main campus. The study concluded that such a strategy was feasible.

OWASA and the University partnered to design, finance and construct the system, and it was placed into service in April 2009. The University paid almost \$15 million to implement the system.

The University now uses reclaimed water instead of drinking water as cooling tower make-up water, for irrigation at several athletic fields and to flush toilets in some new buildings. Reclaimed water meets about 30% of the University's water demand and 10% of the overall community's water needs.

In addition to reducing the community's risk to droughts, the reclaimed water system provides water supply redundancy and reliability benefits for the University.

Providing reclaimed water to the University requires about 40% less energy than pumping raw water from reservoirs, treating it at the drinking water plant, and then pumping treated water to OWASA's distribution (pipe) system.

### **For more information**

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