

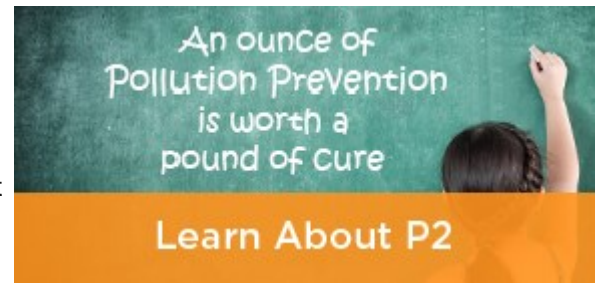
## HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma,  
New Mexico, Texas, and 66 Tribes

### Helping Kids Learn In A Pollution Free Environment

#### Earth Day Is Every Day! Let's Learn About Pollution Prevention and What Schools and Students Can Do!

Pollution prevention (P2) is any practice that reduces, eliminates, or prevents pollution at its source before it is created. It is often more cost effective to prevent pollution from being created at its source than to pay for control, treatment and disposal of waste products. When less pollution is created, there are fewer impacts to human health and the environment.



P2 approaches can be applied to all potential and actual pollution-generating activities, including those found in schools and education institutions. Prevention practices are essential for preserving wetlands, groundwater sources and other critical ecosystems - areas in which we especially want to stop pollution before it begins. In homes and schools, examples of P2 practices include using reusable water bottles instead of throw-aways, automatically turning off lights when not in use, repairing leaky faucets and hoses, and switching to "green" cleaners. P2 reduces both financial costs (waste management and cleanup) and environmental costs (health problems and environmental damage). P2 protects the environment by conserving and protecting natural resources while strengthening economic growth through more efficient production in industry and less need for schools, households, businesses and communities to handle waste.

Quite a few programs have grown out of the P2 Program over the last 30 years. Of note in this issue are Wasted Food, Safer Choice, WaterSense, Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, and Sustainable Materials Management. Did you know that schools and students can make a difference in the environment we live in and can make an impact? It is not always something that government and companies can do, it can be the responsibility of schools or students working alone or in groups. EPA has many programs where the public can take action. This newsletter will introduce you to some of these programs. Share your success stories with EPA Region 6 and they may be included in future issues! Send your success stories via email to Cathy Gilmore at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

### The 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal



The EPA has a U.S. 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal to cut food loss and waste in half by the year 2030. All schools and students can help with this goal. We can all reduce wasted food at home and at school or work. Examples of wasted food include unsold food from retail stores; plate waste, uneaten prepared food, or kitchen trimmings from restaurants, cafeterias, and households; or by-products from food and beverage processing facilities. Wasted food can be managed in a variety of ways, such as donations to feed people or animals, composting, anaerobic digestion, or sending to landfills or combustion facilities.

EPA uses the overarching term "wasted food" instead of "food waste" for food that was not used for its intended purpose because it conveys that a valuable resource is being wasted, rather than "food waste" which suggests the food no longer has value and needs to be managed as waste. We encourage anyone managing wasted food to reference the [Food Recovery Hierarchy](#). When the higher levels of the hierarchy are no longer feasible, leftover food should be put to beneficial use such as composting or be sent to be broken down through [anaerobic digestion](#).

## What Is WaterSense?

WaterSense, a voluntary partnership program sponsored by the EPA, is both a label for water-efficient products and a resource for helping you save water. The WaterSense label makes it simple to find water-efficient products that meet EPA's criteria for efficiency and performance. WaterSense-labeled products and services are certified to use at least 20 percent less water, save energy, and perform as well as or better than regular models. WaterSense partners with manufacturers, retailers and distributors, homebuilders, irrigation professionals, and utilities to encourage innovation in manufacturing and support sustainable jobs for American workers.

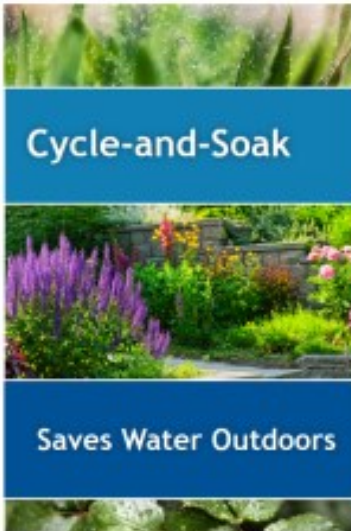
Water is a finite resource – even though about 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered by water, less than 1 percent is available for human use. Despite the water supply and infrastructure challenges faced by many communities across the United States, each American uses an average of 82 gallons of water each day at home. Water managers in at least 40 states expect local, statewide, or regional water shortages to occur over the next several years. Approximately six percent of total water use in commercial and institutional facilities in the United States takes place in educational facilities such as schools, universities, museums and libraries. The largest uses of water in educational facilities are restrooms, landscaping, heating and cooling, and cafeteria kitchens. More information can be found in our [Educational Facilities Fact Sheet](#).



To save water at your educational institution, your school can **develop a water management plan**; assess your water use to identify opportunities for savings and track results; check regularly for leaks and, when found, repair them promptly; replace bathroom fixtures with more efficient models; use water-smart landscaping and irrigation practices; optimize your cooling systems and determine if they can provide or use alternative onsite sources of water; and evaluate equipment in cafeterias, laboratories, and other on-campus facilities for potential water savings. More information can be found in [WaterSense at Work](#).



## WaterSense in Landscapes



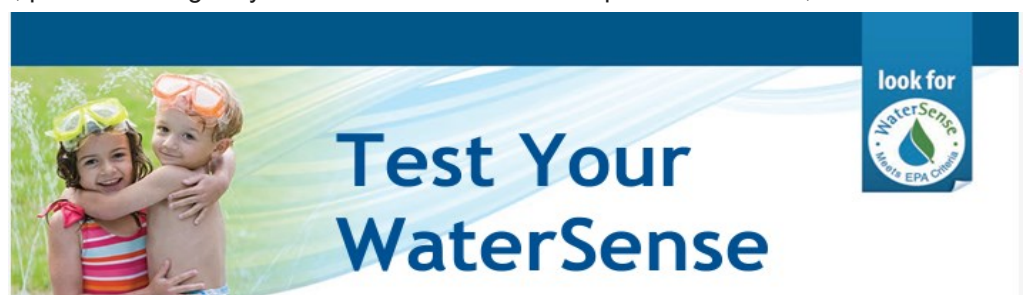
Are you interested in developing a water-smart landscape for your home or property? [The WaterSense Water-Smart Landscapes guide](#) can get you started.

Choosing the right plants, supporting soil health, and proper maintenance are all keys to water-smart landscapes. **WaterSense can mean using regionally appropriate, low water-using and native plants.** Once established, these plants require little water beyond normal rainfall. Also, because native plants are adapted to local soils and climatic conditions, they rarely require the addition of fertilizer and are more resistant to pests and diseases than are other species. Be careful when selecting exotic species, as some may be invasive, which may require more water and could displace native plants.

Fertilizer encourages thirsty new growth, causing your landscape to require additional water. Minimize or eliminate the use of fertilizer where possible. If you do need fertilizer, look for a product that contains "natural organic" or "slow-release" ingredients. These fertilizers feed plants slowly and evenly, helping to create healthier plants with strong root systems and no excessive "top growth." Moreover, using "slow-release" fertilizers can reduce nutrient run-off into ground and surface waters, protecting natural resources. Grass clippings from mowing, when left in place, are a good natural source of fertilizer for the soil and can reduce the overall total fertilizer application required.

If your landscape includes turfgrass, place it strategically in areas where it will have a practical function, and consider using a low-water-use turfgrass suited to grow in your local climate to provide a beautiful lawn that can save water.

A lawn with healthy turfgrass that is not cut too short will also be a good defense at preventing the growth of weeds.



## Ideas on How to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Learn how reducing, reusing, and recycling can help you, your community, and the environment by saving money, energy, and natural resources. Recycling programs are managed at the state and local level—find information on recycling in your community. On the national level, EPA is working to build an economy that keeps materials, products, and services in circulation for as long as possible, [what’s known as a “circular economy.”](#)

**[Think Green Before You Shop.](#)** Reduce associated greenhouse gas emissions by thinking green when you shop.

**[Reduce your food waste](#)** by shopping smart, buying what you need, composting food scraps, and donating unused food to food banks or shelters. More ways to [reduce](#) your impact.

**Reuse or repurpose items** such as old clothing, cloth grocery bags, and containers to prevent waste.

**Buy used items** to reduce waste as well as the emissions created by producing new materials or disposing of them in landfills. [Donate](#) unused clothing, electronics and building materials to make sure others can reuse them too!



**[Buy products made with recycled content.](#)** Check labels to see if a product or its packaging is made from [recycled materials](#).

**Know before you throw.** Know what items [your local recycling program](#) collects and encourage your household to [recycle right and recycle more](#).

**Maintain and repair products**, like clothing, tires and appliances, so that they won't have to be thrown out and replaced as frequently.

**Borrow, rent or share items** that are used infrequently, like party decorations, tools or furniture.

**Recycling** is the process of collecting and processing materials that would otherwise be thrown away as trash and turning them into new products. Recycling can benefit your community, the economy, and the environment. Products should only be recycled if they cannot be reduced or reused. EPA promotes the [waste management hierarchy](#), which ranks various waste management strategies from most to least environmentally preferred. The hierarchy prioritizes source reduction and the reuse of waste materials over recycling.

**Environment:** Recycling provides many benefits to our environment. By recycling our materials, we create a healthier planet for ourselves and future generations.

**Conserve natural resources:** Recycling reduces the need to extract resources such as timber, water, and minerals for new products.



EPA <small>save energy by</small> recycling	
choose a recyclable	power an appliance
Aluminum Can	Air Conditioner
Glass Bottle	Hair Dryer
Plastic Bottle	Laptop Computer
Weekly Magazine	60W Equiv CFL Bulb
Plastic Grocery Bag	
Share your results	Learn more

**Climate change:** According to the [most recent EPA data](#), the recycling and composting of municipal solid waste saved over 193 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2018.

**Energy savings:** Recycling conserves energy. For example, recycling just 10 plastic bottles saves enough energy to power a laptop for more than 25 hours. To estimate how much energy you can save by recycling certain products, EPA developed the [individual Waste Reduction Model](#) (iWARM).

**Waste and pollution reduction:** Recycling diverts waste away from landfills and incinerators, which reduces the harmful effects of pollution and emissions.

**Learn about** what else [you can do](#) at home, at school, at work and in your community!

Sustainable materials management (SMM) is a systematic approach to using and reusing materials more productively over their entire life cycle. It represents a change in how our society thinks about the use of natural resources and environmental protection. By examining how materials are used throughout their life cycle, an SMM approach seeks to use materials in the most productive way with an emphasis on using less, reducing toxic chemicals and environmental impacts throughout the material life cycle, and assuring we have sufficient resources to meet today's needs and those of the future.

By looking at a product's entire life cycle—from materials extraction to end-of-life management—we can find new opportunities to reduce environmental impacts, conserve resources, and reduce costs. For example, a product may be redesigned so it is manufactured using different, fewer, less toxic and more durable materials. It is designed so that at the end of its useful life it can be readily disassembled. The product's manufacturer maintains a relationship with its customers to ensure best use of the product, its maintenance and return at end-of-life. This helps the manufacturer identify changing needs of their customers, create customer loyalty, and reduce material supply risk. Further, the manufacturer has a similar relationship with its suppliers, which helps the manufacturer respond more quickly to changing demands, including reducing environmental impacts along the supply chain.



So what are some of the things that SMM includes? Some examples are reduction of the disposal of building materials and more reuse of those materials, electronics stewardship, improving energy efficiency and reducing energy use, using greener products such as Safer Choice and preventing wasted food.

### Why Is Safer Choice Safer for You?

Safer Choice helps consumers, schools, and others find products that perform and contain ingredients that are safer for human health and the environment. Finding cleaning and other products that are safer for you, your family, and the environment should be easy — that's why EPA developed the Safer Choice label.



Each of us plays a role in protecting human health and the environment. Products with the Safer Choice label help consumers and commercial buyers identify products with safer chemical ingredients, without sacrificing quality or performance. Safer Choice is an [EPA Pollution Prevention \(P2\) program](#), which includes practices that reduce, eliminate, or prevent pollution at its source, such as using safer ingredients in products.

About 1,900 products currently qualify to carry the Safer Choice label. Safer Choice-certified products are available for use [in homes](#) and [in facilities like schools, hotels, offices, and sports venues](#). Before a product can carry the Safer Choice label, EPA reviews all chemical ingredients, regardless of their percentage in the product. Each ingredient must meet strict safety criteria for both human health and the environment, including carcinogenicity, reproductive/developmental toxicity, toxicity to aquatic life, and persistence in the environment. This means that Safer Choice-labeled products are safer for you, your family and pets; workers' health; and fish and the environment.



Participation in the Safer Choice program is voluntary. Companies who make products carrying the Safer Choice label have invested heavily in research and reformulation to ensure that their products meet the [Safer Choice Standard](#). These companies are leaders in safer products and sustainability. Products have to pass EPA's stringent criteria in order to earn the Safer Choice label. The Safer Choice program reviews more than just product ingredients. We also look at product performance, pH, packaging and more to ensure that products with the label are safer for you and your family. Once a product meets the Safer Choice Standard, EPA conducts annual audits to ensure the standards continue to be met.

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Protecting human health and the  
environment.



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## ODDS AND ENDS

### Upcoming Newsletter

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### Feedback

### Disclaimer



In our next issue, the June 2023 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will highlight the following:

- Sunwise and Extreme Heat
- Smart Irrigation
- Cleaning Up the Nation's Land

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We would love your feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

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