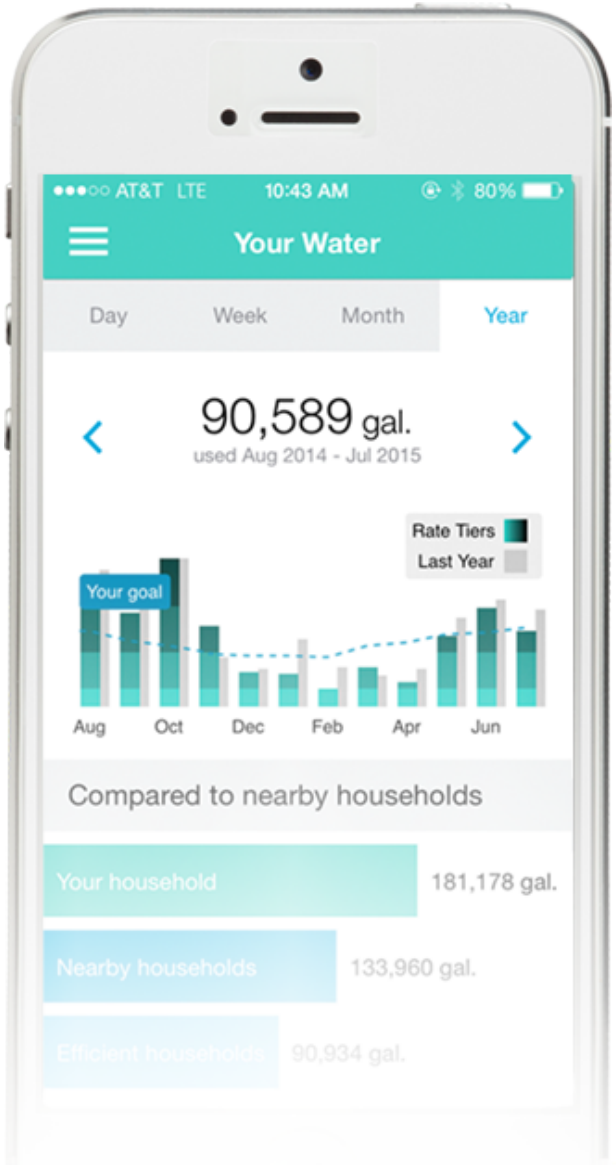


Austin Water's Home Water Use Report Pilot Program

Central Texas Water Efficiency Network Symposium

February 2, 2016

Mark Jordan

Conservation Program Coordinator

Incentive program trends

- Traditional “low hanging fruit” implemented
- Many programs phased out due to federal manufacturing standards, market saturation, and state/local requirements
- Shifting focus to high use areas, auxiliary water, higher standards for new development, and innovative technology and methods

Behavior modification

- Put more information into hands of customers
- Leverage social norms to change behavior by comparing customer's water use with similar and efficient homes
- Give feedback to the customer on water and cost saving ideas and rebates
- Engage customer to set goals

Pilot study questions

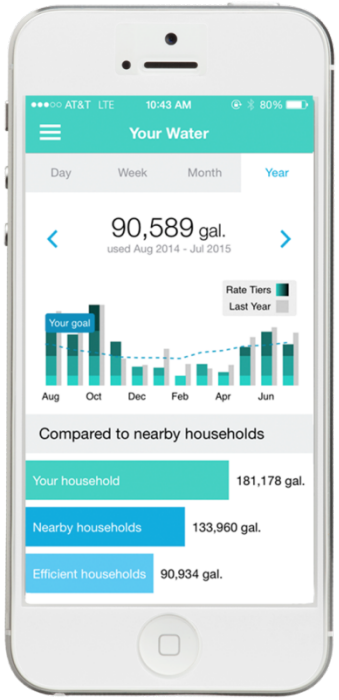
- Will reports result in measurable and significant reductions in household water use?
- Will reports increase program participation?
- Can reports using monthly, rather than "real time" water use still have a significant impact on reducing water use?

- Does providing water use against rate tiers affect water use? If so, by how much?
- What is the most effective application of home water use reports (selected by water usage, geographic area, at random, or self-selection; written, mobile app or internet)?

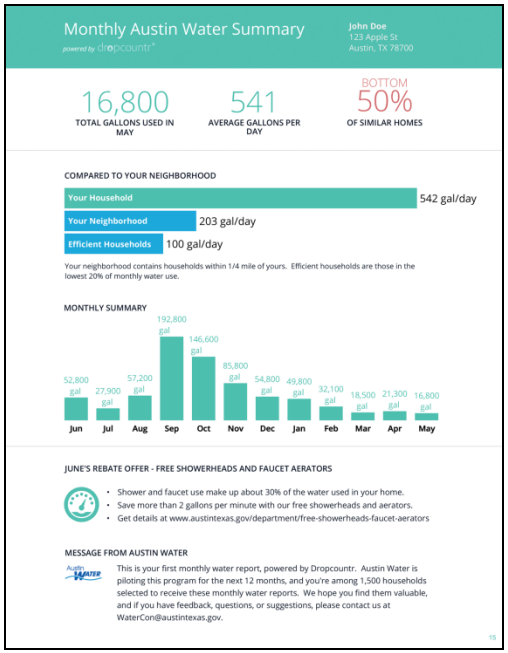
Platform selection criteria

- Mobile phone application
- Custom home water use reports
- Analytics package

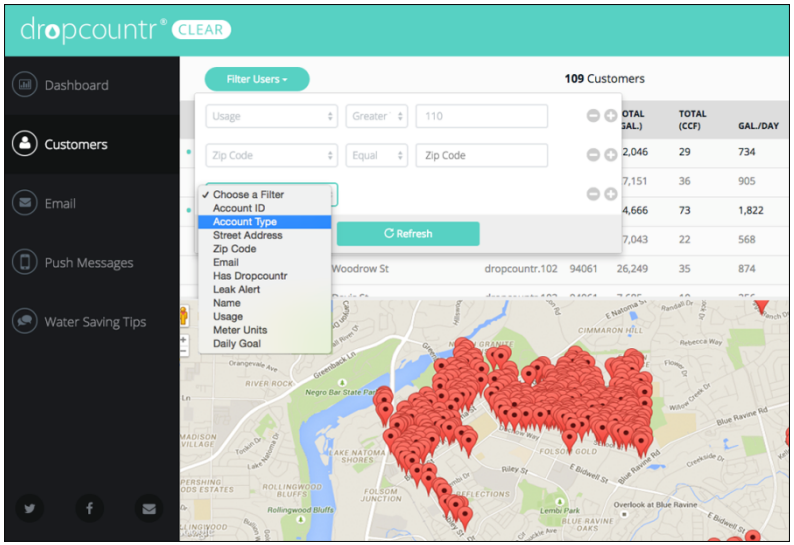
- Intuitive
- ‘Opt in’ approach
- Flexibility
- Cost



Dropcountr App



Mailed Home Water Report



Dropcountr CLEAR Analytics Platform

Pilot scope

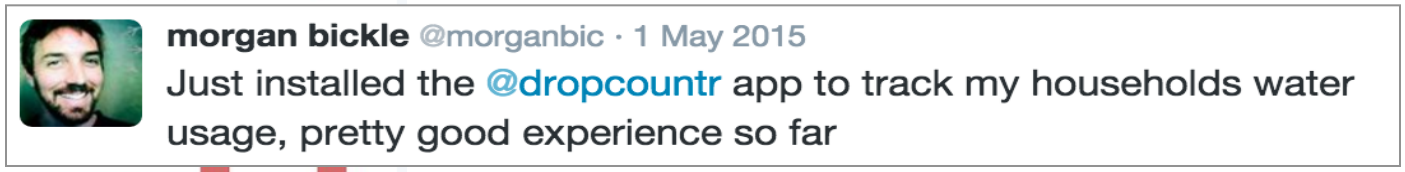
- One year pilot period: May 2015 – May 2016
- 10,000 participants
  - 8500 opt-in mobile app or internet reports
  - 3 control groups to receive mailed reports
    - Top users city-wide
    - High water use neighborhood
    - City-wide at random

Program launch

- Staff training on all tools, anticipated questions, guidance on what to say and show customers
- Prepare for increased customer inquiries
- Coordination with Customer Service, Billing and IT
- Internal staff test group
- Public education and outreach;
- E-mail invitation sent to potential "opt-in" participants

Initial response

- 7,105 of 8,500 interested customers have signed up
- Increased interest in having “smart meter” data
- Range of customer feedback, much of it positive:



Initial assessment

- Too early for precise water saving analysis
- Many external factors affected water use during initial six months
- Has increased customer engagement, initiation of the "Conservation Conversation"

- Cost-effective outreach – rebates and announcements

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