



Groundwater Guardian/Groundwater Guardian Green Site Partnership Case Study



Desert Hot Springs, California

Groundwater Guardian Community: Desert Hot Springs, California

Groundwater Guardian Green Sites: Desert Hot Springs High School, Mission Springs Park, and Mission Springs Water District Offices

Desert Hot Springs is located in the Coachella Valley of California. Desert Hot Springs has participated as a Groundwater Guardian Community since 1995 and has built many strong area partnerships. A unique situation exists within the community – a cold water aquifer supplies the city's 23,000 residents with clean drinking water while a hot water aquifer provides the city with spas that attract people from around the world. The hot water table is shallow compared to other desert aquifers with a water table less than 100 feet deep, and lies underneath some of the most densely populated areas of the city.

The Desert Hot Springs Groundwater Guardian team is made up of longtime city residents with a strong partnership with the Palm Springs Unified School District. They have undertaken numerous groundwater education activities for local students, including the "Newspapers in Education" program, which provides hands-on opportunities for students to learn about groundwater; sponsoring the "Great Water Debate" for over 200 middle school students in the Desert Valley Debate League; collaborating with local school district, Wildlands Conservancy, and a local children's foundation to provide "Desert Watersheds: From Source to Sand" field trips for 4th and 5th grade students; and holding the 11th annual Student Drinking Water Festival at the Desert Springs Middle School. The team also maintains the Groundwater Guardian page on Mission Springs Water District's website and in 2008 worked with seven area locations to earn Groundwater Guardian Green Site designation.

Three of the sites team leader Marge Cook worked with are Desert Hot Springs High School, Mission Springs Park, and Mission Springs Water District offices. The Desert Hot Springs team has a long-time partnership with all three of these sites, which made approaching them about Groundwater Guardian Green Site designation much easier. Water conservation has long been a goal of the Desert Hot Springs Groundwater Guardian team, which saw Green Sites



as yet another tool and opportunity to encourage local green space managers to implement, measure, and document their groundwater-friendly practices.

Mission Springs Park and Mission Springs Water District Offices are both managed by the Mission Springs Water District. The District was established in 1953 and supplies water and sewer service to roughly 30,000 people in an area encompassing 135 square miles around the Desert Hot Springs area. The District provides financial and in-kind support to the Desert Hot Springs Groundwater Guardian team and is recognized as a Groundwater Guardian Affiliate. Both sites implement a number of groundwater-friendly practices, such as limiting pesticide use, arid landscaping using native plants adapted to the desert climate, disposing of toxic substances properly, water conservation measures, and a recycling program.

Desert Hot Springs High School, also designated as a Groundwater Guardian Community since 2000, opened in 1999 and is home to nearly 2000 students in grades 9-12. Desert Hot Springs High School is part of the Palm Springs Unified School District, which has recognized the groundwater educational programs of the Desert Hot Springs Groundwater Guardian team with four "Shiny Apple Awards." The School District is currently designing all new district schools as California High Performance Schools (CHPS) certified. The CHPS program requires a variety of environmentally-friendly and energy efficient design and operations practices, including site selection and water management. Desert Hot Springs High School's management practices and facilities meet these requirements, which complement the practices document in the Green Site program. The school's groundwater-friendly practices include using integrated pest management techniques, updated irrigation technology, a recycling program, arid landscaping, and proper disposal of hazardous materials.

The existing relationships between the Groundwater Guardian team and the sites are made even stronger with the additional recognition of the sites as Groundwater Guardian Green Sites. As Cook points out, "The Groundwater Guardian Green Site program is part of the community's ongoing groundwater conservation, protection, and preservation program." Cook indicates that the Groundwater Guardian team will continue to pursue additional sites in the Desert Hot Springs area for Groundwater Guardian Green Site designation.

Learn more about the Groundwater Guardian and Groundwater Guardian Green Site programs online at www.groundwater.org.

Groundwater Guardian and Groundwater Guardian Green Site are programs of



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