



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kirsten Liske
V.P. of Community Programs
kliske@ecoact.org
831-332-3619

Ecology Action Recommended for \$5M in Grants
to Expand Conservation in Disadvantaged Areas

*Award-Winning WaterLink Program Projected to Save Monterey Bay and South San Francisco
Communities 3.1B Gallons of Water, \$3.23M in Utilities*

MARCH 21, 2017 – SANTA CRUZ, CA – Ecology Action, a Santa Cruz-based nonprofit environmental consultancy, has been recommended to be awarded \$5M for two California Department of Water Resources (DWR) grants to expand its successful WaterLink program in communities disproportionately affected by poverty and pollution. Final awards will likely be confirmed by the DWR Director in March.

WaterLink will help residents and business owners in the Monterey Bay and the South San Francisco Bay areas save an estimated 3.1 billion gallons of water and \$3.23 million in utility costs per year.

The initial WaterLink partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Water District in 2016 has earned Ecology Action a Silicon Valley Water Conservation Award from a coalition of government, business and nonprofit agencies. Ecology Action representatives will receive the award during a lunch March 22, which is recognized as World Water Day.

“Despite our wet winter, water conservation is still critical as many California aquifers are drastically reduced, and the water that remains is increasingly at risk of saltwater contamination as sea levels rise,” said Kirsten Liske, Vice President of Community Programs at Ecology Action. “The WaterLink program is an important tool in combatting water waste and climate change and raising up communities in need, showing that environmental protection and economic well being do go hand in hand.”

The new funding would come from the DWR’s Water-Energy Grant Program which is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of cap-and-trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

“The Water-Energy Grant program is a way for DWR to partner with local agencies to help Californians realize real water and energy savings and contribute to the State’s continued efforts to make water conservation a way of life and address climate change,” says Tracie Billington, Chief of the Department of Water Resources’ Financial Assistance Branch.

This is the same source that provided the \$2.5 million grant funding the current WaterLink program in Santa Clara County.

“Efficiency and conservation efforts are often the first overlooked when talking about California’s energy and water challenges, but they are the most critical for our communities,” says Assemblymember Mark Stone, co-chair of the California Environmental Legislative Caucus. “As

California sets big goals for the future, it is important that we don't leave out disadvantaged communities. The approval of these state funds for Ecology Action's efforts in these communities is an example of the state's commitment to these goals and the great track record that Ecology Action has in applying such funds."

Launched in 2016, WaterLink provides residents, business owners and schools with no-cost direct installation of water efficiency hardware and in-person technical expertise designed to save water and energy. Hundreds of residents will receive free installation of water-saving dish and clothes washers. The expanded program will offer free leak testing and repair vouchers as well as large rebates for new commercial dishwashers.

WaterLink proves that what is good for the planet is also good for people and the economy by providing direct economic benefits to the communities it serves. The program is committed to hiring at least 50% of all staff directly from those communities, providing over \$1 million in wages over five years. With the new funding, WaterLink will save the 11,400 homes and businesses it will serve over \$5.7 million per year in utility costs.

Quick Facts

In expansion areas the WaterLink program will:

- Serve 16 census tracts designated as disadvantaged communities, primarily in Salinas, Watsonville, Pajaro/Mesa, Hayward, Santa Clara, East Palo Alto, and Daly City, including 9,800 homes and 1,677 food service establishments.
- Save an estimated 3.09 billion gallons of water and 637 kilowatt hours of electricity during its operation, March 2017 through December 2018.
- Save residents nearly \$1.25 million per year in water utility costs and \$1.98 million per year on energy utility costs.

For images, video and full facts, contact Kirsten Liske.

About Ecology Action

Ecology Action's mission is to help people act now so all people and the planet thrive. The non-profit consultancy partners with utilities, local and federal government, foundations and communities to help residents to conserve water, use alternative transportation, protect water quality, and save energy. Founded on Earth Day in 1970, Ecology Action is passionately driven to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to take actions today that benefit the economy, our health and the environment. To learn more, visit www.ecoact.org.

About Santa Clara Valley Water District

The mission of the Santa Clara Valley Water District is to provide safe, clean water to Silicon Valley for a healthy life, environment, and economy. They are nationally recognized as a leading water resources management agency. SVCWD is a wholesale water provider for local municipalities and private water retailers who deliver drinking water directly to homes and businesses in Santa Clara County. They manage an integrated water resources system that includes the supply of clean, safe water, flood protection, and stewardship of streams on behalf of Santa Clara County's 1.9 million residents. For more information, see valleywater.org.

About the Silicon Valley Water Conservation Awards

Recognizing the primacy of water to the health and economic vitality of our region and to the environment, the Silicon Valley Water Conservation Awards are presented to organizations, agencies, businesses and individuals whose programs and leadership have advanced water conservation and reuse (recycling) in Silicon Valley (San Mateo County, Santa Clara County and Alameda County from Hayward south). The goal of the Awards is to raise awareness and celebrate outstanding achievements in water conservation and reuse through best practices, efficiency and innovation. <http://www.waterawards.org/>

About the California Department of Water Resources

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is responsible for managing and protecting California's water resources. DWR works with other agencies to benefit the State's people and to protect, restore and enhance the natural and human environments. The [Water-Energy Grant Program](#) provides funds to implement water efficiency programs or projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce water and energy use. Learn more at <http://www.water.ca.gov/>.

About California Climate Investments

The Water-Energy Grant Program is part of California Climate Investments whose projects include affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, more sustainable agriculture, recycling and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are made in disadvantaged and low-income communities. For more information, visit [California Climate Investments](#) at <https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/auctionproceeds.htm>.

###