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Wyland Foundation Announces 2026 National Mayor’s Challenge Winners as Residents Pledge to Save 511 Million Gallons of Water

Laguna Beach, Napa, Athens, Mesa, and Los Angeles recognized for leading their population categories in the annual campaign for water conservation, pollution reduction, and watershed health

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — [May 26, 2026] — The Wyland Foundation today announced the 2026 national winning cities of the Wyland National Mayor’s Challenge for Water Conservation, recognizing communities that used mayoral leadership and resident pledges to advance water conservation, pollution reduction, and watershed health.

This year’s winning cities are Laguna Beach, California; Napa, California; Athens, Georgia; Mesa, Arizona; and Los Angeles, California. Together with participants nationwide, residents pledged actions projected to save 511,412,556 gallons of water, reduce pollution, cut waste, conserve energy, and protect the waterways that connect neighborhoods to rivers, lakes, bays, and oceans.

From drought and rising water costs to polluted runoff, aging infrastructure, beach closures, plastic waste, and watershed health, water issues are increasingly shaping the future of communities across the country. The Mayor’s Challenge helps cities bring those issues into public view through practical actions residents can take at home and in their neighborhoods.

“Most people don’t think of themselves as part of a watershed,” said Steve Creech, President of the Wyland Foundation. “But the choices we make at home — how we water, what we throw away, what goes down the drain, how we care for our yards — all move through the larger water system. This challenge helps people see that connection, and gives cities a positive way to turn awareness into action.”

The 2026 National Winning Cities

The Mayor’s Challenge is a city-based civic engagement campaign; residents may participate whether or not their mayor formally campaigns. Winning cities were selected by resident pledge activity within each population category using raw campaign data. Public impact totals reflect the live verified pledge counter methodology.

Population category	Winning city	Pledged actions	Water saved
5,000–29,999	Laguna Beach, California	4,645	47,613,636 gallons
30,000–99,999	Napa, California	1,462	5,905,006 gallons
100,000–299,999	Athens, Georgia	4,653	22,486,968 gallons
300,000–599,999	Mesa, Arizona	3,493	14,536,094 gallons
600,000+	Los Angeles, California	44,142	183,262,924 gallons



Together, participants nationwide pledged actions projected to reduce household costs by more than \$6.2 million, conserve 30.9 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, reduce more than 2.08 billion pounds of CO₂ emissions, keep 13.1 million pounds of waste out of landfills, eliminate the use of more than 1.17 million plastic water bottles, save 3.61 million gallons of oil, and prevent 29,280 pounds of hazardous waste from entering the environment.

Why These Cities Matter

Each winning city reflects a different water challenge facing communities across the country:

Laguna Beach, California: coastal water quality, runoff, storm drains, and ocean health.

Napa, California: drought readiness, agricultural landscapes, and watershed resilience.

Athens, Georgia: local streams, stormwater, and downstream river health.

Mesa, Arizona: desert water supply, outdoor water use, and planning for a drier future.

Los Angeles, California: large-scale participation, stormwater capture, pollution prevention, and regional water resilience.

A Different Kind of Engagement Tool for Cities

The winning cities are the headline, but they also show how any city can use the Challenge to start a bigger conversation about water. Water agencies remain essential to conservation, infrastructure, and long-term reliability. The Mayor's Challenge supports that work by adding a civic engagement layer — bringing in mayors, schools, residents, and local partners through friendly competition and practical action.

For cities, the campaign can elevate local priorities such as drought planning, stormwater pollution, outdoor water use, household hazardous waste, single-use plastics, and watershed health. For residents, it connects those priorities to choices they can make at home, right away.

“The Challenge is not just about asking people to save water,” said conservation artist and founder Wyland. “It is about helping people see themselves as part of the solution. That is a very different conversation than simply telling people there is a problem.”

Innovation, Local Impact, and Rewards for Residents

The 2026 campaign also features the Wyland Foundation's Impact Insight Tool, which helps participants see how their pledge choices can support water quality, household savings, infrastructure resilience, and local environmental health. The tool connects everyday actions — from reducing outdoor watering and fixing leaks to cutting single-use plastics and properly disposing of household chemicals — to the water issues that matter most in and around each participant's hometown.

Supported by the *National League of Cities*, *The Toro Company*, *Zenni EcoBloomz Eyewear*, and the *U.S. EPA*, the Challenge reaches communities through city halls, schools, businesses, and local residents. Participants in winning cities are eligible for sponsor-supported prizes, including \$3,000 toward home utility bills, home improvement gift cards, and Zenni EcoBloomz eyewear.





This year, *The Toro Company* is also providing a new suite of grand prizes: a complete Toro smart watering system for residents in winning cities. Five residents in each winning city will receive a full irrigation upgrade package, including a smart controller, high-efficiency nozzles, rain-sensing technology, and access to Toro expert support — designed to help reduce outdoor water use, lower costs, and protect local waterways. Prize winners will be awarded over the summer.

A Year-Round Platform for Water Action

Beyond the winning cities, the Mayor’s Challenge gives communities a free public-service platform to engage residents, schools, businesses, and civic leaders on water conservation, pollution prevention, and watershed health. Residents participate through MyWaterPledge.com, while the Wyland Foundation continues the work year-round through education and action programs including Streams of Hope, its upcoming watershed stewardship program for schools, and the MyVolunteer Water Project.

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Sponsors and Partners

The Wyland National Mayor’s Challenge for Water Conservation is supported by partners including the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, The Toro Company, National League of Cities, ZENNI Optical EcoBloomz Collection, and CBS Los Angeles**. These partners were also identified in the prior campaign release materials supporting water stewardship, pollution reduction, and ocean protection.

About the Wyland Foundation

Founded in 1993 by marine life artist Wyland, the Wyland Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, and preserving the world’s oceans, waterways, and marine life through public education. The foundation works to inspire people to stop ocean pollution at the source by showing how daily choices — especially around water use, runoff, landscaping, waste, and pollution prevention — can improve watershed health from neighborhoods to rivers to the ocean.

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The Wyland Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
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