

Potable Reuse: Developing a Public Outreach Program

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Today's Agenda

- 
- Water reuse/potable reuse challenges
 - Public outreach programs to engage community members
 - A few outreach “lessons learned”

So You Need More Water...

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- Why you might look for a new water source:
 - Increased demands
 - Climate change impacts
 - Competition for traditional water sources
 - And more
 - Goal: a sustainable, resilient source
 - Water conservation, groundwater desalting, importing water, groundwater recharge, new storage reservoirs – and water reuse

Let's Talk Water Reuse

- 
- Resilient, local, sustainable, constant
 - Our community is “into” recycling – they’ll love it!
 - Or will they?

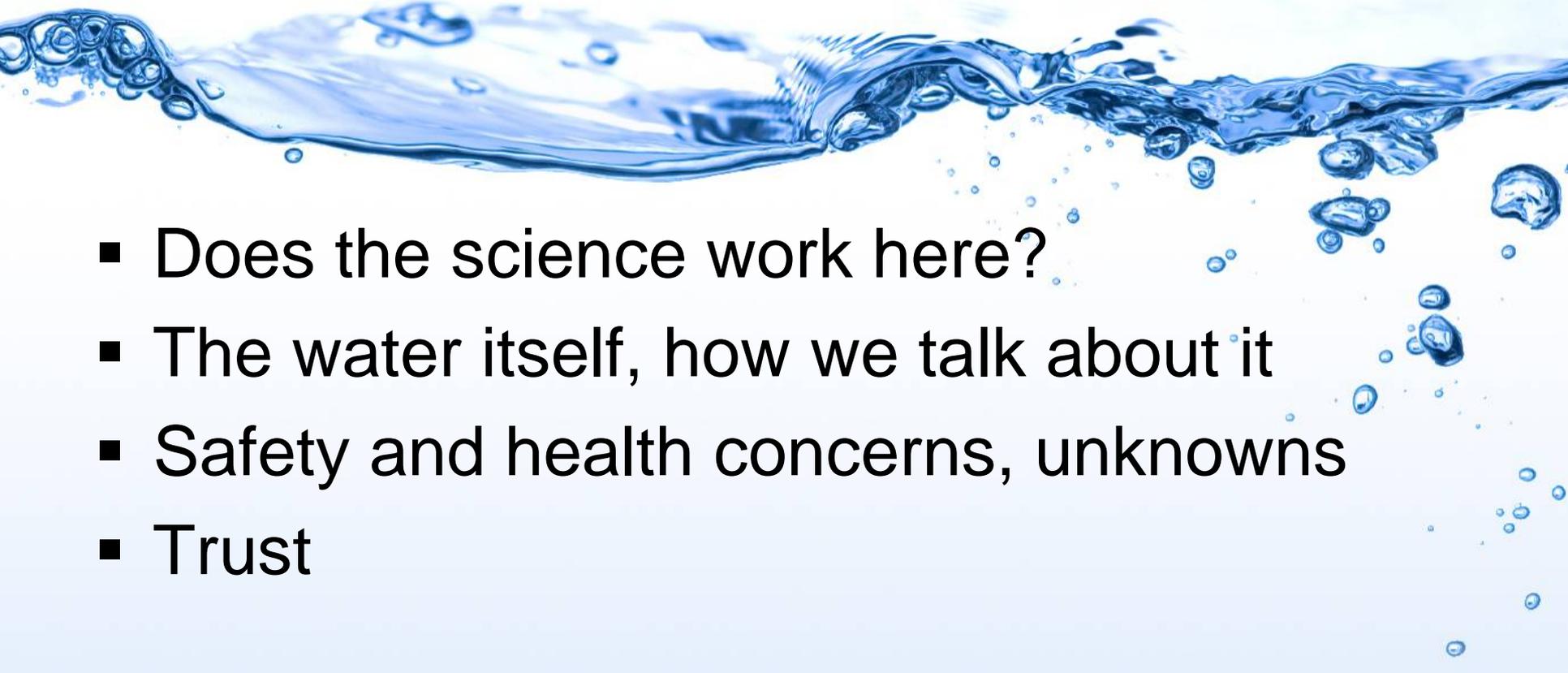
Opposition Happens



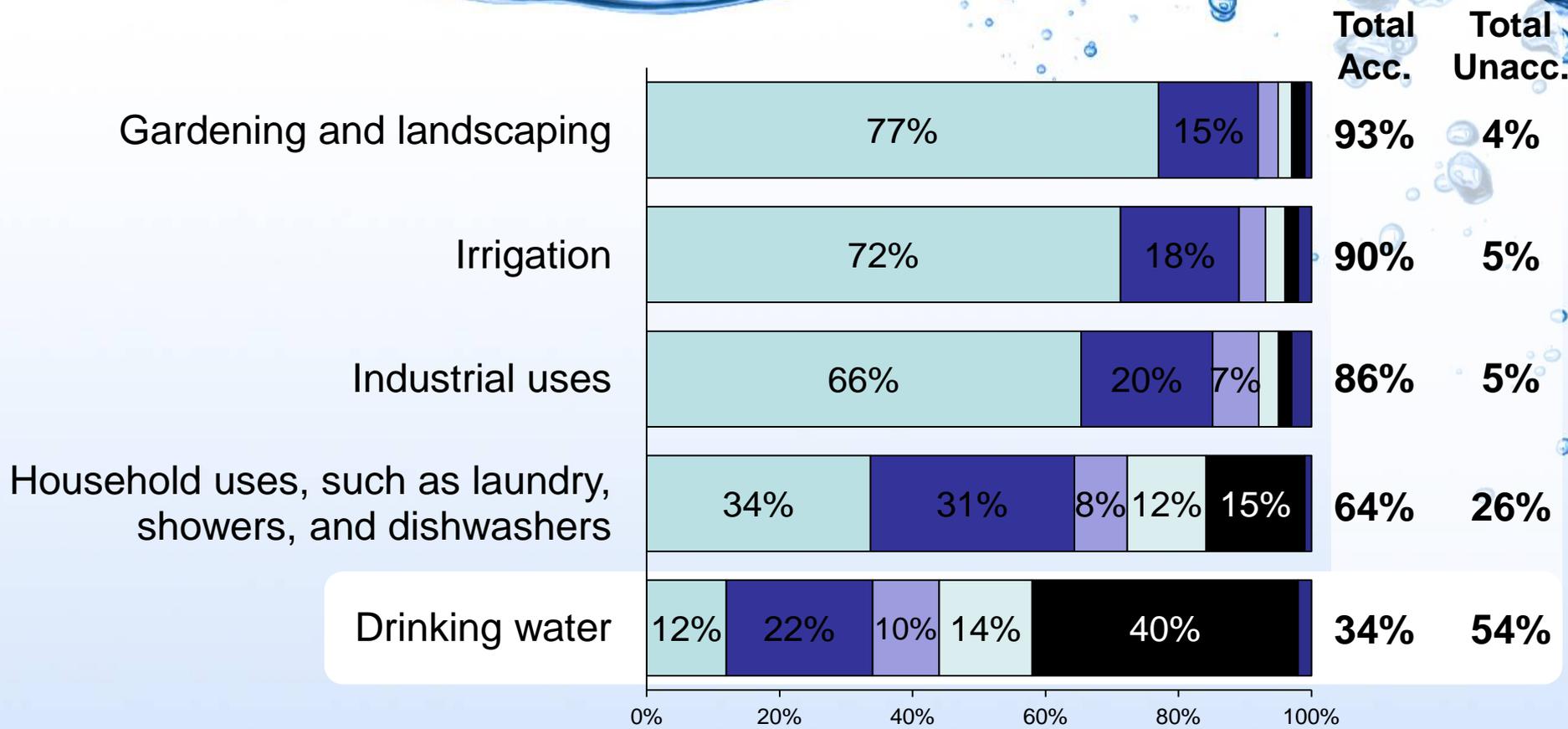
- Opposition CAN'T be totally controlled
- Opposition CAN develop at any time
- Opposition may not be able to be neutralized

***You need a good “insurance policy”
– effective, robust public outreach.***

Water Reuse Challenges

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- Does the science work here?
 - The water itself, how we talk about it
 - Safety and health concerns, unknowns
 - Trust

Locally, voters approve of all potential uses of recycled water... except drinking.



Q9. Asked only of the 73% familiar with recycled water

Potable Reuse Challenges



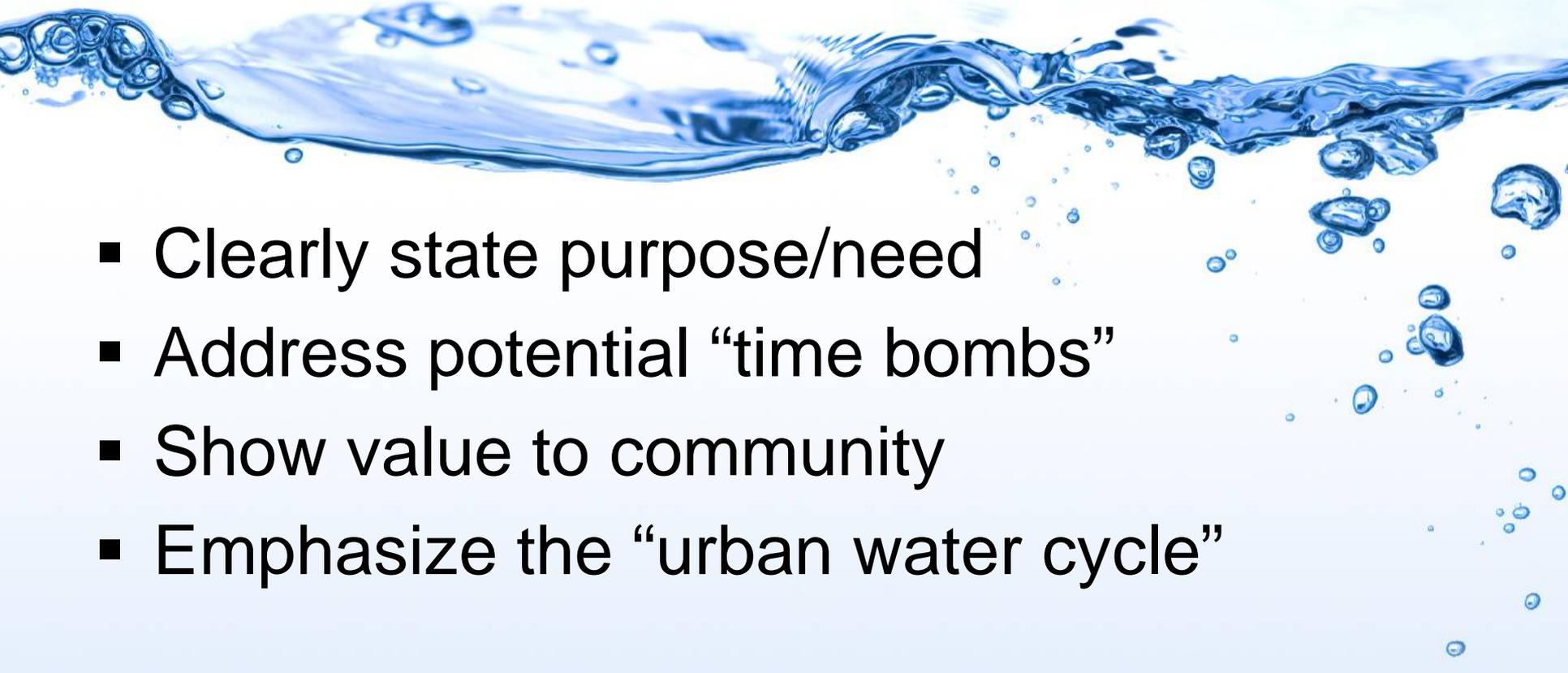
Impediments to Acceptance

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- Safety/health/quality concerns
 - Engaging busy public, leaders, elected officials
 - Making complex issues understandable: terminology, lay language, messages
 - Media sensationalism

Three Key Guidelines

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- Define purpose/need
 - Identify range of community interests, understand concerns and issues
 - Outreach must be consistent and sustained or no one will remember the program/project

The What and the Why

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- Clearly state purpose/need
 - Address potential “time bombs”
 - Show value to community
 - Emphasize the “urban water cycle”

Consistency Counts



- Orange County's GWRS is a model
 - Leadership at board and staff level
 - Research-based messages
 - Effective multi-cultural outreach
 - Frequent briefings: policy makers/media
 - Comprehensive, sustained outreach program
- “We talked to anyone who would listen to us!”***

What's Worked Well

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- Plant tours
 - Direct face-to-face contact
 - Working closely with community leaders
 - Community-based advisory group
 - Keeping regulators informed
 - Media: establish relationships and engage them early

What's Worked Well, cont'd

- 
- School outreach
 - Frequent notices of water supply levels
 - Speakers' bureau
 - Getting written support
 - Website, videos, radio interviews, social media

WRRF 13-02: Research Findings



- Majority support IPR (62%)
- Initially most oppose DPR – but support goes to 56% with information about safety
- Treatment steps alone build support
- Testing/monitoring influence support
- Environmental message next most effective

Outreach Lessons Learned

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- Ensure water agency is project lead
 - Emphasize importance/need for **all** local water supply sources
 - Correct inaccuracies immediately
 - Conduct repeated policy maker briefings
 - Identify/work with strong third-party allies

More Outreach Lessons

- 
- Emphasize the water cycle!
 - Terminology matters
 - Know your community
 - Tours/tasting opportunities
 - Media outreach/social media
 - “Go to them” vs. “Come to us”

Summary



- Develop a strategic outreach plan.
- Remember that policy makers are a key audience
- Look for **all** outreach opportunities
- Make sure outreach is consistent and sustained
- Get out of the office and into the community

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