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The University of Texas at Austin is presenting a Water Reclamation Program for innovation credits through the 2014 Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Ratings System managed by AASHE.

The Water Reclamation Program involves using reclaimed water, water that is recycled from wastewater generated by homes and businesses, in place of higher-quality domestic potable water for industrial cooling tower operations. The University of Texas designated reclaimed water as the primary source of industrial cooling tower makeup to one of many central chilling stations in April 2013. The Water Reclamation Program at The University of Texas demonstrates water conservation through water reuse. Additional conservation efforts including water reclaim and recycle, originating at the wastewater plant, has afforded the University with this innovational reuse option. Together, these concerted practices have reduced standard treatment effluent of the wastewater plant, extended the limited finite water resource – our domestic drinking water supply, and provided cost effective-sustainable solutions.

Through reclaimed water use, this program and practice will allow the University of Texas to replace several million gallons of potable drinking water a year, thereby saving thousands of gallons of water each day that would otherwise be withdrawn from the fresh water reservoir. Furthermore, replacing potable drinking water with reclaimed water in an industrial cooling tower application will generate savings for the city. By concept alone,

this innovational practice will reduce the energy required for generation and production of potable treated municipal water. Although the preparations of reclaimed water use is fairly new to the Austin area, the forthcoming ability to adopt reclaimed water use campus wide will enable the city to concentrate greater efforts on advanced waste water treatment plant technology. Increasing the availability of reclaimed water through reuse lines and infrastructure to industrial users like the University of Texas could, in all probability, delay costly construction of new drinking water treatment plants.

The University of Texas at Austin reclamation program is mutually beneficial for the university and the environment. This practice has resulted in a net cost savings for the university, as a result of the reduced cost of the reclaimed water. Equally as important, it has renewed a step in water conservation sustainability to secure the scarce fresh water resource and reduced the volume of treated effluent discharged to the Colorado River.

Sincerely,

Chris Roberts, CWT