Ceres Connect the Drops Initiative

**WHO**

Project Lead: Ceres  

**WHAT**

The Ceres Connect the Drops initiative brings together 35 companies from multiple sectors including food and beverage, apparel, tech, and others, which have strong leadership in corporate water stewardship. By leveraging its expertise in water issues and policy, Ceres helps businesses to identify potential policy engagement opportunities that would drive water sustainability in California. Ceres facilitates policy engagement through advocacy tools, including face-to-face meetings, press conferences, OpEds, sign-on letters of support, and other approaches. The initiative promotes stronger policies that address water conservation and efficiency; water reuse; stormwater capture, use, and recharge; sustainable groundwater management; and funding for smart water projects in California.

**WHY**

In California, water issues are exacerbated by climate change, resulting in prolonged periods of drought followed by excessive rainfall. Water scarcity creates a material issue for many businesses dependent on water resources in the state, through operations, supply chains, and customers. This initiative is bringing the business voice to Sacramento, the state’s capitol, to remove barriers to and accelerate adoption of improved water management practices for California.

For more information visit: [https://www.ceres.org/initiatives/connect-the-drops](https://www.ceres.org/initiatives/connect-the-drops)
CHALLENGES

• **Engaging policy makers:** State policy makers have many competing priorities and issues to address. Drawing the attention of these policy makers to water issues, especially when the state is not in a drought, can be difficult.

• **Engaging businesses:** Companies similarly have many competing priorities, of which water is only one. As such, it can be challenging to keep companies engaged and meaningfully involved in the collective action efforts of the initiative.

SUCCESSES

• Connect the Drops is increasing the visibility of businesses speaking out for sustainable solutions in California water policy. The business voice is often seen as less progressive or seeking to impede environmental policies, but this group is sending a message to policy makers that companies want to see sustainable water management and policy that supports that.

• The advocacy and engagement of Connect the Drops corporate members contributed to the passage of Water Use Efficiency Bills AB 1668 and SB 606, the Open and Transparent Water Data Act (AB 1755), the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (SB 200), and others.

KEY INSIGHTS

• It takes significant times and resources to keep companies engaged and interested in the initiative. It is important to maintain consistent and persistent contact and keep companies excited about the work.

• Because a multi-sector, unified, constructive business voice is often absent from policy-making processes, this initiative plays a crucial role in helping to make businesses share their water stewardship stories and vocalize why it is important to move thoughtful water policy forward. Leveraging the power of collective action and bringing together 35 companies helps make their agenda more visible and credible.

SCALING & REPLICATING

Connect the Drops started with seven company signatories and quickly scaled to 35 by educating companies around the importance of public policy engagement. Ongoing recognition of member companies’ efforts and successes inspires peers to take action as well. Connect the Drops is also coordinating with the California Water Action Collaborative to identify policy barriers to innovative water projects that should be addressed. Lastly, there is growing interest and potential to bring the Connect the Drops model to other states and regions facing water challenges.

TAGS

**Stewardship Strategies**

- Water Management in Direct Operations
- Value Chain Engagement
- Collaboration at Watershed Scale
- Nexus Approaches

**SDG 6 Targets**

- Target 6.1: Safe and affordable drinking water
- Target 6.2: End open defecation and provide access to sanitation and hygiene
- Target 6.3: Improve water quality, wastewater treatment and safe reuse
- Target 6.4: Increase water-use efficiency and ensure freshwater supplies
- Target 6.5: Implement integrated water resources management
- Target 6.6: Protect and restore water-related ecosystems

This case study was created by the Pacific Institute for the Walton Family Foundation.