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**Nationwide initiative encourages water-saving measures**

MILAN, Ill. – Call it old-school, but the rule at Stern Beverage in Milan, Ill., is this: Male employees must be clean shaven.

Until now.

Stern Beverage is joining Budweiser brewer Anheuser-Busch's national campaign with Chad Pregracke's Living Lands and Waters to conserve water by encouraging men to stop shaving from May 22-June 5, which is World Environment Day.

Each shave uses between three and 10 gallons of water, or roughly five gallons on average.

"We apologize in advance to our customers who will not be able to recognize our drivers and salespeople shortly," said Matt Stern, president and CFO of Stern Beverage. "We invited all male employees to participate. Those who don't want to participate have the option of waxing their beard."

The employees will stop shaving today. On Thursday, June 2, they will hold an “un-bearding” at 5 p.m., to show off employees’ facial hair. The event will be held the company’s corporate office, 961 Tech Drive, Milan.

Pregracke and crew is scheduled to be there to judge whose beard is best.

Meanwhile, anyone age 21 and older can post a photo of their own beard on the Stern Beverage Facebook page. The person with the most “likes” under their photo by 6 p.m. Sunday, June 5, will win a Budweiser Mini Fridge.

Furthermore, Budweiser, which Stern distributes, is asking adult men across America to help save one million gallons of water by not shaving in the days and weeks leading up to World Environment Day. As part of Budweiser's ongoing commitment to water conservation, the “*Grow One. Save a Million.”* program allows consumers to get involved.

Those 21 years of age and older can visit Budweiser's Facebook page ( http://www.facebook.com/Budweiser ) to make a pledge and share the program with Facebook friends. Participants can commit to a range of options, from a few days to multiple weeks. Women can get involved by recruiting male friends or family members. The page also features a daily tracker of the gallons saved to date.

"Water is a key ingredient in the brewing of Budweiser and all our beers, which is why water conservation is a priority both inside and outside our breweries," said Kathy Casso, vice president of Corporate Social Responsibility at Anheuser-Busch. "In the past three years alone, our 12 U.S. breweries have reduced water use by 34 percent. Additionally, our employees and their families take action by volunteering to participate in local river cleanup projects in communities across the country."

In 2010, more than 1,200 employees from Budweiser brewer Anheuser-Busch skipped shaving for one week prior to World Environment Day, helping to save about 42,000 gallons of water. This year, Budweiser expanded the effort by inviting suppliers, partners, wholesalers, retailers and consumers to join the effort.

"Every gallon of water that we save makes a difference to our communities, so when thousands of people get together for one common cause, great things can happen," Pregracke said.

In 1998, Pregracke founded Living Lands & Waters, a not-for-profit organization based in East Moline dedicated to cleaning up and preserving our nation's rivers.

Stern Beverage, Inc. was founded in 1986 by Michael Stern Sr. This family-owned company distributes in Illinois from Rock Island, Mercer and parts of Henry counties to the Wisconsin border.

The beard campaign builds on the commitment Stern offers to Pregracke's organization, including $5,000 in donations this year. Company representatives, along with the Budweiser Clydesdales will be presenting Anheuser- Busch's donation to Pregracke and Living Lands and Waters at River Roots Live this summer.

"We are honored to have Chad and Living Lands and Waters right here in our backyard," Matt Stern said. "They do so much for our community as well as many others. We hope many others will put their razors down for the next couple of weeks."