

Your Watershed: Why Water Conservation?

Everyone is aware that water is a limited resource and that it should not be wasted, but is water conservation always needed? During times of drought, the importance of water conservation is obvious - a shortage of water means the demand on our supply must be reduced. During times of plentiful rainfall the need for water conservation is not always as obvious. Because of this, the Russian River Watershed Association would like to remind you that water conservation is always needed.

Water is a finite resource that cannot be created. The majority of the water we use in our homes and businesses is water taken from the Russian River watershed and from the fish and other wildlife that rely on that water to live. Therefore, it is extremely important that every drop of water we take from the water cycle be used as efficiently as possible to achieve full benefit from it. By constantly implementing water conservation, we can further reduce demand within the limits of our potable supply, avoid waste, and achieve the full benefit of every drop.

There are simple things that every person can do to help improve their water use efficiency and reduce water waste. One simple way to conserve water is to change your habits. Think about the ways in which you use water and determine if there are ways to either use less or eliminate the use of water all together. For example, turn the water off while brushing your teeth, don't use your toilet as a wastebasket, use your garbage disposal less, only wash full loads in your dishwasher and washing machine, don't leave the water running, and use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway and sidewalks. These are just some of the many ways that you can change your habits to reduce water use.

The biggest single cause of water waste is leaks. A leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons per day! Test your toilets faucets and showerheads for leaks, and check your meter to see if the low flow indicator is spinning. If you have a leak, fix it right away. The longer you wait, the more water, and money, you waste.

During the summer months, water used for your landscaping can drive your summer water use to more than twice what you use in the winter months. During these months of peak water use, you can conserve water by watering in the pre-dawn hours to reduce water loss to evaporation; using repeat start times and short run times for each irrigation station to allow more water to soak in to the ground and reduce runoff; checking the schedule on your irrigation controller regularly. In our region, plants typically need the most water in July. As we enter into the fall, even when the weather is hot, shorter days translate to plants needing less water.

Finally, you can conserve water by taking advantage of incentives and rebates that your water utility offers. Many water utilities offer programs and rebates that will assist you in reducing your indoor and outdoor water use. Call your local water utility to find out what rebates they offer and how they can help you reduce your water use.

By changing your habits, checking for leaks, improving your irrigation water use efficiency, and taking advantage of water conservation incentives and rebates, you can save water, save money, and help protect our limited resource for future generations.

The Russian River Watershed Association is an association of eleven cities, counties and special districts in the watershed that are working together on programs for clean water, fisheries restoration and watershed enhancement.