

DRAFT RRWA January 2010 Environmental Column
Winter Water Conservation - Save Water Now, Save All Year

This past summer residents, businesses and land owners throughout the Russian River watershed once again responded to the requests to conserve water and did a great job reducing water use to help preserve water supply in Lake Mendocino. More and more residents are making improvements to their irrigation systems and removing high water use plants in their home gardens and public landscapes, replacing them with low water use plants to help reduce summertime water use. Water is a limited resource and it is important that we use every drop as efficiently as possible all year round. Typically, in the winter most water use is from indoor household and business activities. By installing efficient fixtures, eliminating wasteful practices and using water wisely during the winter, you invest in year-round water savings because indoor fixtures are used all year. Not only are you saving our precious water resource, but you are also reducing the amount of wastewater that must be treated.

As utility costs continue to rise, there are simple things that you can do to reduce your water use and ultimately save money on your water and sewer bill. One way to save water now is to turn off your irrigation system during the winter months. Our region typically receives much more rainfall in the winter than plants need to stay healthy, so there is no need to irrigate during these months. Even during dry periods in the winter, plant growth is very slow and supplemental irrigation is rarely needed. By turning your irrigation system off now, you will eliminate waste and save money.

A second way to save water and money is to check for and repair leaks. The biggest single cause of high utility bills is leaks. A single leaking toilet can waste over 200 gallons per day, and this is water that is also flowing to the sanitary sewer! To eliminate water waste from leaks, test your toilets and check your faucets and showerheads for leaks. Also, turn off all of your water using devices and check your meter to see if the low flow indicator is spinning. If it is moving, you may have a leak. Fix leaks right away because the longer you wait, the more money and water you waste. The "Water Saving Home" web site at <http://www.h2ouse.org/> has great tips for how to detect leaks, fix leaks, choose efficient plumbing fixtures and adopt water wise habits.

Another way you can save water and money is to improve the efficiency of your indoor water use fixtures. Consider replacing toilets with high-efficiency toilets (also called HET) that flush at 1.28 gallons per flush or less. Upgrade showerheads and aerators to high-efficiency versions and consider replacing your washing machine with a qualifying high-efficiency model. Many of our water and electric utilities provide rebates and incentives for replacing indoor water use fixtures with high-efficiency models.

Finally, you can save water and money by thinking about how you use water and determining if there are ways to either use less or eliminate the use all together. For example, turn the water off while brushing your teeth, don't use the toilet as a wastebasket, use your garbage disposal less, and only wash full loads in your dishwasher and washing machine. Changing these habits will change your bill, and save our precious resource.

By turning off your irrigation system in the winter months, checking for leaks, replacing your indoor water fixtures, and improving your water use efficiency, you can save water, reduce wastewater and save money all year long!

This article was authored by Jennifer Burke of the City of Santa Rosa on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement

DRAFT