

Your Watershed: Water Conservation, How Can You Help?

By: The Russian River Watershed Association

What can you do to conserve water in your community? Water is a valuable resource, especially in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties during the summer months. Due to a relatively low amount of rainfall during the past winter and the current influx of heat, water will be a limited resource in our area throughout the summer. Therefore, our community cannot afford to lose any water whatsoever through frivolous or unnecessary use. As the citizens of Mendocino and Sonoma Counties, it is our collective duty to effectively conserve this lacking resource in order to increase its availability in our community and in the environment.

Water conservation can be defined as habits or practices that improve the efficiency of water use. An increase in the efficiency of water usage is directly proportional to an increase in the availability of water resources in any given community.

The average U.S. citizen uses approximately 70 gallons of water every day. Many people view water as a plentiful, everlasting resource, however, this is not the case. If a few, simple precautions are taken, water can become a surplus, rather than a scarcity, in our community during the summer months. Here are a few, simple actions that you can perform in order to conserve water in your community:

- 1. Detect and Repair Leaks.** Inspect your faucets, showerheads, toilets, dishwashers, washing machines, pools, and irrigation systems regularly for any cracks, holes, or flaws that may result in a leak. Fix all leaks immediately!
- 2. Replace Outdated Appliances.** Replace your outdated toilet with a low-volume, 1.6 gallon per flush model, which conserves an optimum amount of water. Replace your outdated washing machine by installing a front-loading washer that has a water factor rating of 9.5 or lower, which uses 35-50% less water and 50% less energy per load than older washers.
- 3. Don't Overwater Your Plants.** Tend only to plants that are suitable for your local climate conditions. Also, don't water your plants too much or too often; plants should be watered in correlation with the weather. In addition, water your plants between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. in order to prevent water loss through evaporation.
- 4. Start a Compost Pile.** Rather than using your garbage disposal, start a compost pile. Compost contributes water-holding organic matter to the soil.
- 5. Shower Quickly.** Save 1,000 gallons a month by keeping a daily shower under 5 minutes.

- 6. Don't Let the Water Run.** When brushing your teeth, shampooing and conditioning your hair, and shaving, turn off the water to save up to 4 gallons per minute.
- 7. Recycle Water.** Use the excess water from everyday tasks to water your houseplants, or put it to another use.
- 8. Soak Your Dishes.** Soak pots and pans in the sink instead of letting the water run from the tap as you clean them.
- 9. Use Recirculation.** Equip your pools, hot tubs, ponds, and fountains with recirculation pumps. Cover pools and hot tubs when not in use to prevent water loss through evaporation.
- 10. Wash with a Full Load.** Be sure to run the washing machine and dishwasher only when there is a full load.

RRWA (www.rrwatershed.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.