What to Do to Conserve Water

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Most new homes constructed in the Truckee Meadows are required to have water meters. Since residents in these homes are required to pay for the total amount of water they use, it is beneficial to conserve water wherever and whenever possible. Additionally, homeowners can significantly reduce the volume of wastewater discharged to home septic systems and sewage treatment plants by conserving water. Since 75 percent of septic tank drain field failures are due to hydraulic overloading (too much wastewater in the septic tank at once), conserving water can reduce the potential for surface water contamination, groundwater contamination and homeowner headaches!

What you can do to conserve water:

- Don’t run the water continuously when washing the dishes, brushing your teeth, shaving, etc.
- Use low-flow faucets, faucet aerators, low-flow shower heads, reduced-flow toilet-flushing equipment, and water-saving appliances such as dishwashers and washing machines.
- Promptly repair leaking faucets, toilets, and pumps.
- Use dishwashers and washing machines only when fully loaded.
- If it is time to replace your washing machine or dishwasher, consider purchasing a high efficiency model that reduces water usage per load. Look for an Energy Star model.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Collect the “warm-up” water in a bucket as you wait for the water to heat up in the kitchen and bath. Use this water for house plants, landscape watering, or pets.
- Avoid or reduce the use of your garbage disposal. Garbage disposals use a large amount of water and also add organic material to either your septic system or our sewage treatment plant.
- Don’t hose down driveways or sidewalks. This wastes water and washes pollutants into the storm drain. Instead, sweep these areas and dispose of materials in the trash.

To test for a leaking toilet, put a few drops of food coloring in the water tank. If colored water appears in the bowl after 30 minutes, without the toilet having been flushed, your toilet has a leak.
The gutters on the house above direct rain toward landscaped areas. This reduces runoff filters out pollutants and aids groundwater recharge.

The house on the left includes a rain barrel under the downspout. The barrel has a filter system that excludes debris and pests. The water is stored for later use.

Have you heard about evapotranspiration?

Evapotranspiration, or ET, is the combined water loss that occurs from soil and plants. It is dependent on the temperature and humidity of the air, the temperature and moisture content of the soil, and the density of the vegetation. Rough estimates can be made on the expected evapotranspiration rates based on these parameters.

The ET rate can then be used to determine the necessary watering time for your lawns and gardens. In the Truckee Meadows, a Web site has been developed to provide such recommendations. Go to http://www.washoeet.dri.edu/ to access the daily data.

For more information:

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