

# Clean Waters

## Starting in Your Home and Yard



### Conserving Water at Home

Water is a precious natural resource that benefits all living things. It provides nourishment for people, animals and plants, and serves as the living environment for aquatic life. Maintaining a safe and adequate water supply is everyone's responsibility. The daily actions of individuals and communities directly impact water supplies. By making sensible choices, people can preserve and protect household water.

Water conservation has personal and economic impacts. Especially during drought conditions, homeowners can extend their water supply by practicing conservation year round. An extended water supply provides an added measure of safety, protects lawns and gardens, and enables people to enjoy modern conveniences which often are taken for granted, such as a consistent water supply and plumbing that operates as designed. Water consuming appliances may not produce the expected results during drought conditions (e.g., laundry may appear discolored).

Municipal customers save money on water, sewer, energy and potential tax bills by practicing conservation. Municipalities that consume substantial amounts of water typically increase taxes in order to construct sewage treatment plants that can adequately handle the volume and lessen the load on existing systems. It is preferable for communities to improve water treatment technology, rather than build additional treatment plants. Both municipal and household sewage treatment systems require water in order to function. As water consumption increases, costs increase. For homeowners on private septic systems, the tank must be pumped more frequently with increased water use. As septic systems experience greater stress, they are likely to require replacement more frequently, costing thousands of dollars.

#### DEVELOP WATER SAVING HABITS

Modify your household water usage patterns by involving every person in your home. Children can get really excited if you make it a game and are a source of inspiration for the entire family!

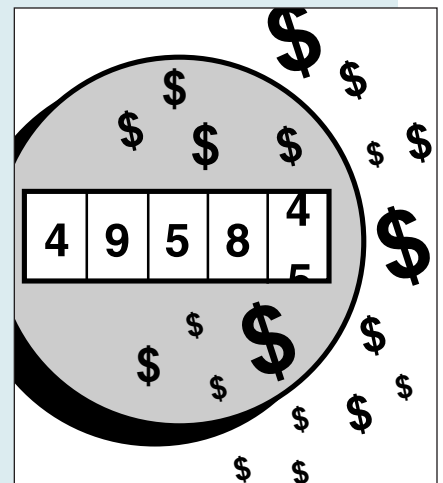
#### In the bathroom...

- Shorten shower time (use a minute timer) and install low-flow-showerheads (that deliver 1.5 gallons of water per minute) with shut-off valves (for turning water off temporarily while soaping or shampooing) and aerators (screens that introduce bubbles, producing a feeling of greater water pressure). These devices are easily installed and very cost effective.

- Run hot water very briefly before getting in the shower. When taking a bath, close the stopper from the start and then let the water rise in temperature in the bathtub.

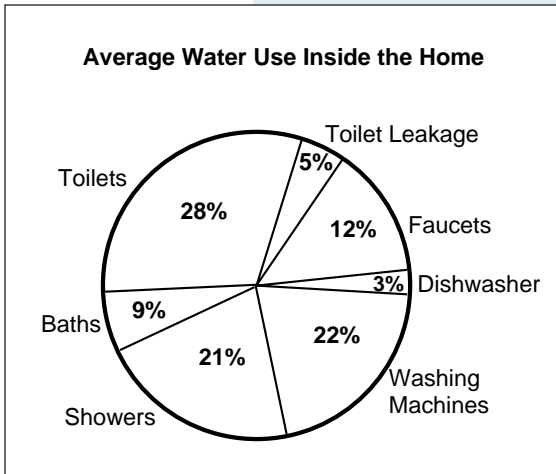
- Install low-flow faucet fixtures and repair leaks promptly. A leaky faucet can result in a daily loss of fifteen gallons of water. Encourage family members to turn faucets off tightly when not in use; turn the water on and off while brushing your teeth or partially fill the basin while shaving to save up to ten gallons of water daily. Continuously running water is very wasteful.

- Toilets are the major water consumers in most homes. Consider replacing older toilets with ultra-low-



*Clean Waters is a collaboration of the Connecticut Sea Grant Extension Program and the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System's NEMO Project, educating individuals about the impacts of everyday activities on water quality and simple techniques that help protect water resources from the home well to Long Island Sound.*

flush (ULF) models. Traditional toilets use about 3.5 to



7 gallons of water per flush, depending upon their age. ULF models use about 1.6 gallons per flush and are characterized by efficient bowl and discharge designs, compatible with existing plumbing fixtures.

If toilet replacement is not feasible, be sure to check all household toilets for leaks by placing three drops of food coloring

inside the tank. If the food coloring appears in the bowl without flushing, a leak is present. The trip mechanism may not be attached properly; or the flushball/flapper may be old and distorted in shape or may not be making the right contact with the ball seat and needs to be replaced. If the valve is not shutting off, the float ball may either need to be adjusted or repaired/replaced if defective. Occasionally, the ball seat may be the source of the problem that can be solved by cleaning, repairing or replacing the seat.

Installing a dual flush mechanism on an existing toilet is another option until the toilet can be replaced. With this mechanism the user can choose between two different water settings.

- Remind family members to dispose of kitty litter, tissues, paper towels, cigarettes and other litter in wastebaskets...not the toilet!

#### In the kitchen...

- Run the sink for the minimum amount of time necessary to clean dishes, food, pots and pans and other items. Soak dishes in a dishpan, if necessary. Rinse all vegetables at once. Avoid running water continuously when performing kitchen tasks!
- Replace faucets with water-saving devices and check valves for leaks.
- Use the minimum amount of detergent (low-sudsing) to avoid excessive rinsing of dishes and countertops.
- Apply elbow grease and a sponge or scrubber to clean sinks. Do not use lots of water to remove debris from sinks.
- Store a pitcher of cold water in the refrigerator so

you will avoid running water until it gets cold.

- Research has shown that automatic dishwashers use less water than hand dishwashing. Measure detergent, select water and energy conserving cycles, run only full loads and avoid excessive pre-rinsing.
- Boil only as much water as you need in a tea kettle or covered pot (with a lid) and turn it off as soon as it boils to reduce evaporation and waste.
- Dispose of vegetable scraps in a compost pile; the garbage disposal wastes water.

#### In the laundry...

- Sort clothing, pretreat stains, select the load size which corresponds to the quantity of clothing you are washing, measure detergent, and use the recommended water temperature.
- When purchasing a washing machine, consider new front-loading models that consume only 30 percent of the water of traditional top-loading models.

#### In the household...

- Inspect your water meter for leaks by reading the meter (number) at night (after family members have stopped using water). The next morning, before anyone uses water, check the number on the meter again. If the number has changed, there is a leak in the system. Assuming leaks in household faucets/appliances have already been corrected, have the piping system inspected to determine the source.
- It is preferable to select household cleaners that do not require rinsing with water. For cleaners requiring hydration, measure and make the minimum amount needed.

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