

California's water emergency hits home

TIPS ON SAVING WATER FOR WILLITS-AREA RESIDENTS

By Quinton Roland
Willits Water Conservation Officer

Earlier this year Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger responded to California's third consecutive year of drought by proclaiming a state of emergency.

"This drought is having a devastating impact on our people, our communities, our economy and our environment, making today's action absolutely necessary," Schwarzenegger said. "This is a crisis, just as severe as an earthquake or raging wildfire, and we must treat it with the same urgency." The governor asked all Califor-

nians to reduce their water use as much as possible. "Even with the recent rainfall, California faces its third-consecutive year of drought, and we must prepare for the worst—a fourth, fifth or even sixth year of drought," he said. "Last year we experienced the driest spring and summer on record and storage in the state's reservoir system is near historic lows."

Why conserve water in Willits?

The City of Willits water treatment plant and supporting facilities are old, and straining at

or above reliable capacity to meet customer demands. The capital construction costs of repairing, upgrading and expanding our current water supply system range in the millions of dollars, which is mostly born by ratepayers.

An alternative to increasing supply is to reduce water demand by conservation. Many studies have concluded that water

conservation can cost half as much as system expansion in terms of cost per-gallon saved/produced.

Conserving water by consuming less, wasting less, or reusing more, can save ratepayers money and postpone or eliminate the need for expensive system expansion.

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Willits Water Conservation Team in front of the 14,000-gallon rainwater harvesting storage tank at Brookside School farm. Standing, left to right: Quinton Roland, City of Willits Water Conservation specialist; John Sherman, former acting Water Conservation specialist; Mendocino County Supervisor John Pinches; City of Willits Community Development Director Alan Falleri; Liam UíCearbhaill, WELL; Cyndee Logan, Water Grant Committee. Kneeling/sitting, left to right: Jason Bradford, WELL and former Brookside School Farm manager; David Parch, WISC garden manager; NCO Director Patty Bruder; WISC garden manager Ursula Parch; Antonia Partridge, WELL and current Brookside School Farm manager.

Photo-provided by Quinton Rowland



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America has tripled its per capita water use since 1950. Although Willits is doing better than the average California town, the average citizen uses more than twice as much as its counterparts in Germany or Mexico. As much as half the city's water use can be attributed to wasted water flowing down the drain or the gutter.

Gallons per day per person:

- 120 Willits
- 110 Sonoma County
- 87 Petaluma
- 108 San Francisco County
- 67 Mariposa County
- 77 Civano Community (Tucson Arizona)
- 29 Switzerland
- 77 France
- 46 Germany
- 39 Mexico
- 39 Brazil

Nation data derived from WRI (1999). Values converted to US units.

City of Willits water conservation program

Quinton Roland is the new City of Willits Water Conservation specialist, hired to launch and manage the Willits Water Conservation Program.

"We already have four completed and operational water efficiency demonstration projects, thanks to the Willits Water Conservation Team and sponsorship by the City of Willits, volunteers and a California Pollution Control Financing Authority (CPCFA) Sustainable Communities Grant," Roland says. "Anyone is welcome to join our Conservation Team to help design and implement water conservation programs, including fixture/appliance replacement rebates; public education events and publications, identifying a site for a grey water demonstration project, and free residential and commercial water auditing."

What you can do to conserve water?

Fix that leak

Read your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, you probably have a leak. Faucets can drip at the rate of one drop per second, wasting more than 3,000 gallons of water a year.

Toilets can leak at a rate of 200 gallons a day, which can add up to 73,050 gallons of water a year. To find out if you have a leak, place a drop of food coloring in the tank. If the color shows in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak.

Give your shower power

Shower more / take fewer baths. Taking a five-minute shower uses 10 to 25 gallons of water. Install a water saving showerhead to reduce the flow.

A full bath tub requires about 70 gallons of water. Place a stopper in the drain immediately and adjust the temperature as you fill the tub to limit waste.

Turn it off

The average bathroom faucet flows at two gallons per minute. Turning off the tap while brushing your teeth saves up to eight gallons of water per day, 240 gallons a month, 2,880 gallons a year.

National Wildlife Federation tips for saving water outdoors

- ♦ Create a water-efficient yard/landscape
- ♦ Employ efficient irrigation techniques
- ♦ Water your landscape at dawn and dusk. Ensure all your watering stays contained within your yard and doesn't flow down the street into the stormwater system.
- ♦ Use ornamental plants and ground covers that are suitable to long, dry summers and rainy winters are called "Mediterranean zone" plants.
- ♦ Limit the amount of area devoted to your lawn. Lawns need great quantities

Point-of-use water heaters (instantaneous)

Installing these separate units beneath the kitchen and bathroom sinks gives you instant hot water and also saves water and electricity. You don't have to run the tap to wait for the water to get warm.

Make it a full load

The average washing machine uses about 41 gallons of water per load. High-efficiency washing machines use less than 28 gallons of water per load.

Wash only full loads of laundry or use the appropriate load size selection on the washing machine to save water.

Don't flush your money down the drain

If your toilet was made before 1993, you probably have an inefficient model that uses at least 3.5 gallons per flush. New high-efficiency models use less than 1.3 gallons per flush. Installing a new toilet could save a family of four more than \$90 on their water bill annually, \$2,000 over the lifetime of the toilet.

Curb your water use

Learn about the typical home water use or visit h2ouse.org to take the virtual tour of a water-saver home. Take the initiative to

implement some simple water conservation tips.

Look at your water bill to figure out much water use you use on a monthly basis.

Visit the drinktap.org website for advice on using water more efficiently.

of water, particularly in the summer.

♦ Wait until fall or winter to install a new garden. New plantings require more water than established growth.

♦ Keep low-water plants away from "thirsty" plants. Mediterranean zone plants can suffer if they are over watered as you care for their neighbors.

♦ Keep shade plants in the shade. This will help prevent them from drying out.

♦ Place water-loving plants at the bottom of slopes where they will benefit from water runoff.

♦ A garden hose can use 10 gallons of water per minute. Use a broom instead of a hose to clean patios, walkways, and driveways. When you do need the hose, use a nozzle to increase pressure and decrease water usage.

For more information and a list of water conservation websites, contact the City of Willits Water Conservation specialist

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