Simple Ways to Reduce Water Consumption

Outdoor Water Use

- Fix leaking sprinklers, spigots and hoses. One broken sprinkler can use an additional 100 gallons in a typical 10 minute watering cycle.
- Raise your lawn mower blade to at least 3 inches. This encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the roots and holds soil moisture better than a closely clipped lawn.
- Water your lawn with only one inch of water every seven to ten days (less often if we’ve had rain). Overwatered lawns and plants grow shallow roots and are more likely to die in periods of drought.
- Don’t water between 10 am and midnight. The water evaporates before plants can use it.
- Use a low-flow nozzle on your hose. Using a standard nozzle on your hose to wash your car or plants can require hundreds of gallons more water than a low-flow nozzle.
- Mulch! Using pine straw, bark chips or ground hardwood mulch on the roots of plants and trees helps the soil retain water.
- Use plants appropriate for our climate. Ask your local nursery about drought-tolerant plants and trees appropriate for Georgia. See next page for more information.
- Do not use a hose to clean your driveway or sidewalk. Use a broom instead and save hundreds of gallons of water.

Toilets, Faucets, Showers and Washing Machines

Did You Know?
A showerhead or faucet leak of one drop per second adds up to 2,700 gallons/year!

- Fix toilet leaks: This can save you thousands of gallons of water each year!
- Turn off the bathroom faucets when brushing and shaving: Save up to 3,000 gallons/year!
- Don’t use your toilet as a wastebasket.

- Replace your old toilet. If you have a pre-1993 toilet, you can save more than 16,000 gallons per year by purchasing a high-efficiency model (1.3 - 1.6 gallons per flush). Unlike the first generation of low-flow toilets, new models reduce water use without sacrificing performance.
- Replace your old faucets and showerheads. High-efficiency sink faucets (1.5 gallons per minute or less) and accessories (like aerators) can reduce this standard flow by more than 30 percent without sacrificing performance.
- Take short showers rather than baths: Taking a five-minute shower uses 10 to 25 gallons as opposed to 30 – 70 gallons for a bath. If you take a bath, stopper the drain immediately and adjust the temperature as you fill the tub.
- Run full laundry loads or use the appropriate load size selection on the machine.
- When you replace your old washing machine, purchase a high-efficiency washing machine that uses less than 27 gallons of water per load.

Everywhere You Look, You’ll Find Another Easy Way to Reduce Water Consumption
Detecting Hidden Leaks

To detect hidden leaks:

- 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. To download a guide to reading your meter, please visit water.cobbcountyga.gov/files/meterhowto.pdf *

To tell if your toilet has a leak:

- Place a drop of food coloring in the tank; if the color shows in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak in the tank.
- To see if the leak is coming from the flush valve, shut off the water supply to the toilet. Mark the water level on the inside of the tank with a pencil. Check the water level in 10 or 20 minutes. If the water has fallen, you know the flush valve is leaking.
- If the water seems to run constantly in the toilet, your refill valve may be leaking. In this case, the tank overfills and the excess water runs into the overflow pipe and into the bowl.

For more information and repair tips, Ace Hardware has an excellent FAQ section, as well as installation guides, in the Projects & Solutions section of their website: www.acehardware.com/infohome/. Home Depot also has guides in the Know-How section of their website at homedepot.com.

Advice on Proper Yard Watering

Cobb County provides instructions on proper yard watering

- Call 770-419-6244, or
- Download the guide at water.cobbcountyga.gov/files/IrrigationAudit.pdf

ConserveWater Georgia offers plenty of information, tips, and creative ideas.


Find the right plants and trees for your yard!

- Online guides to appropriate plants and trees for Georgia can be found at: georgiagaces.caes.uga.edu Search for “drought-resistant” (georgiagaces.caes.uga.edu/getstory.cfm?storyid=1155)

How you design your landscape is also important. Check out the following guides:

- http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B1073.htm

Audit Your Usage

To help you learn more about how much water you are using in your home, Cobb County has a quick, 2-page home water audit that you can complete: http://water.cobbcountyga.gov/files/wateraudit.pdf. By completing this questionnaire and submitting it to the Water Efficiency Program, you may qualify for FREE water saving devices and water efficiency information.

*Any documents on-line that have a “.pdf” extension require Adobe Reader. You can download it for free at: http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html
Dear Members of the Residence,

As you may know, Cobb County's water resources are stretched because of population growth and many years of low rainfall. Cobb County residents consume almost one out of every ten gallons of Georgia's public water supply. As a result, our water use has a large impact on the ability of Georgia's waterways to protect wildlife and dilute pollutants that threaten human health. We all need to work together to use water wisely.

As we enter the summer months, we thought that you might be interested in the following information about your water consumption last year:

Your own total consumption June to October 2006: 142,000 gallons

Cobb County now charges higher prices as you consume more water. So reducing your water consumption can save you money. It can also protect your landscaping investments: people tend to overwater their lawn and plants. Overwatered plants grow shallow roots and are more likely to die in periods of drought.

We have enclosed a tip sheet that lists proven ways to reduce your water consumption. You can obtain more information on-line (http://water.cobbcountyga.gov/efficiency.htm and http://www.waterusewisely.com/) or by contacting Ms. Kathy Nguyen, Water Conservation Coordinator, at 770-419-6244 or Kathy.Nguyen@cobbcounty.org.

We need your help. Act on the tips listed in the enclosed tip sheet. We all have to do our part to protect Cobb County's precious water resources. Reducing our water consumption today is important for preserving our environment and our economy for future generations. Please don't waste water. Remember: every drop counts!

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Kathy Nguyen
Water Conservation Coordinator

May 2007
Sample Letter – Strong Social Norm Treatment

Cobb County...Expect the Best!

May 2007
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As we enter the summer months, we thought that you might be interested in the following information about your water consumption last year:

Your own total consumption June to October 2006: 50,000 gallons
Your neighbors’ average (median) consumption June to October 2006: 35,000 gallons

You consumed more water than 72% of your Cobb County neighbors.

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