

WHY CONSERVE WATER ?

There are many reasons for water utilities to pursue wise water use and establish a water conservation program. The specific reasons will be different for each utility, and the appropriate level of conservation for a utility should be tailored to local needs.

- **Cost savings**--lowering water production and/or distribution costs will save the utility and its customers money in reduced operation cost and possibly deferred capital costs. Conservation is often an important part of a least-cost future water supply plan.
- **Wastewater treatment and disposal benefits**--reduction of interior water use cuts wastewater flows, resulting in cost savings and lessened environmental impacts of treated wastewater disposal.
- **Environmental benefits**--water removed from a water body for human use could be used for environmental or other purposes. For example, protection of endangered species often requires a reliable source of good quality water, which might be lessened by water withdrawals.
- **Competing beneficial uses**--in addition to the environment, water left in place could be used for agriculture, power production, recreation, aesthetic enjoyment, etc.
- **Water supply limitations**--few places now enjoy unlimited water supplies. Water conservation can stretch existing supplies, whether supply is from groundwater or surface water.
- **Utility stewardship and sustainability**--utilities that conserve water demonstrate leadership in resource management and are working toward a goal of sustainability. More economic activity can occur on the same water resource.
- **Energy savings**--reducing water production will save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Improved supply reliability**--conservation can reduce the frequency and duration of drought water use curtailments by essentially increasing supply.
- **Customer benefits**--customers who conserve water may enjoy lower water bills and possibly lower wastewater and energy bills.
- **Regulatory compliance**--some state regulatory agencies require water conservation plans and/or implementation progress to qualify for permits, grants, and loans.
- **Public perception**--the public often insists on demonstrating efficient use of existing water supplies before supporting expansion of supplies to meet new water needs.

Conservation of precious water resources requires action both from water suppliers and water consumers. Water utilities must reduce loss from leaking pipes and consumers must reduce consumption.