

The importance of water is too often overlooked. For more than 30 years, the American Water Works Association (AWWA) has celebrated Drinking Water Week with its members -- a unique opportunity for both water professionals and the consumers they serve to join together to recognize the vital role water plays in our daily lives. During the first week in May, utilities, their communities and other groups across the country celebrate our most precious natural resource, water.

Established in 1881, AWWA is the oldest and largest nonprofit scientific and educational organization dedicated to safe water in North America. AWWA has over 57,000 members worldwide and its 4,700 utility members serve 80 percent of America's population.

Water is our most precious natural resource, and in celebration of Drinking Water Week 2005 (May 1-7), the Albemarle County Service Authority urges our customers to continue in their growing trend to conserve water.

"Drinking Water Week reminds us of the essential role we each play in respecting and protecting our drinking water supply," said Jack Hoffbuhr, executive director of the American Water Works Association. "Drought conditions have forced many of us to rethink the way we approach our water supply."

The past few years have been some of the most drought-stricken the United States has seen in 100 years. As this summer begins, your local water utilities will keep a close eye on the water supply and any potential shortages and will work to keep the public informed on developments that will affect them. Water professionals are exploring many topics to ensure the preservation of our water supply, including increased focus on protecting our watersheds and expanding the use of water conserving technologies for irrigation and industrial uses.

Water consumers can play a large role in ensuring the continued availability of their water supply. Daily indoor per capita water use in the typical American single family home is 69.3 gallons. Households can easily reduce this water use by about 35% to 45.2 gallons per day by employing conservation measures.

What can local residents do?

- Don't over-water your lawn, and water early in the morning or at night to avoid excess evaporation.
- Fully load the dishwasher and clothes washer before running them.
- Defrost frozen food in the refrigerator or in the microwave.
- When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run.
- If you have a swimming pool, use a cover. You will cut the loss of water by evaporation by 90 percent.
- Repair dripping faucets and leaky toilets. Dripping faucets can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water each year in the average home. Leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons per day. Contact the Albemarle County Service Authority at 977-4511 to find out if you might be eligible for a rebate of up to \$100 to replace an old toilet.
- Don't leave the sink running while you brush your teeth.
- Help preserve the quality of the available water supply by not overusing pesticides and fertilizers, avoiding flushing medications down the toilet or sink, and disposing of hazardous materials properly.
- Contact the Albemarle County Service Authority to learn if you are eligible to obtain free low flow fixtures such as showerheads, faucet aerators and toilet tank displacement bags.

“We’re all stewards of the water we use,” Hoffbuhr said. “Utilities, elected leaders, state and federal agencies, and consumers all have a responsibility to ensure that our water supply is protected and there is enough available for use by future generations.”