

Following a long, rainy week it is difficult to comprehend any need for water conservation. The reality however is that no matter how much precipitation we receive wise use of water is always a good practice. It is easy to believe that there will forever be a sufficient amount of water available to sustain human life. The problem however is that our water consumption demands have far exceeded the volume necessary for sustainability.

Many uses of water have moved far beyond sustainability to a symbol of wealth. While sustainable water usage includes basic sanitation needs of sinks, tubs and toilets, drinking water and water for livestock, today's water uses include all of these uses and among other things pressurized fire sprinkler systems, decorative fountains, swimming pools, hot tubs, irrigation systems, dishwashers, clothes washers, large whirlpool bathtubs, and multi-head showers.

As a result of these new, and ever increasing demands on our water supply, it is within everyone's best interest to use water as wisely as possible. During the drought most of the Charlottesville community rallied together to save every drop of water they could. Citizens willingly took on inconvenient habits in the name of saving water. Now as the water supply has recovered, citizens are less willing to be inconvenienced by water saving practices. Fortunately, there are still plenty of ways to conserve water or use it more efficiently without inconvenience.

One of the easiest ways to do this is by updating water-using fixtures. Adding an aerator to each of the faucets in your home or workplace, updating your showerhead to a new, low-flow variety and changing your toilet to a low-flow type will all provide water savings without any impact to your day-to-day routine. Saving water without adjusting behaviors is a win-win situation for this community and for yourself.

In an attempt to assist local citizens in this endeavor, the Albemarle County Service Authority and the City of Charlottesville both offer many great water saving devices to their customers. For more information on the City of Charlottesville's offerings, contact their Utility Billing Office at 434.970.3211. Albemarle County Service Authority provides its customers with free low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators, toilet displacement bags, and rebates for installing low-flow toilets.

Previously, these devices were only available to single-family residential customers in homes built prior to 1992. They are now available to all Albemarle County Service Authority customers in homes or businesses built prior to 1992. Single-family residential customers may be eligible to receive up to three of each device and rebate per household, while multi-family residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial customers may be eligible for a rebate to replace all toilets within their buildings.

Funding for the toilet rebate program is limited, so it is essential that anyone interested in participating contact Albemarle County Service Authority as soon as possible to find out if they qualify. All rebates will be offered on a first come, first served basis.

The Albemarle County Service Authority and City of Charlottesville are dedicated to encouraging wise use of water. We hope that all customers will take advantage of these great opportunities, as they will not only provide water savings to the community, but financial savings to our customers.

The first full week of May is dedicated to The Wonder of Water as recognized by National Drinking Water Week. The Albemarle County Service Authority is so proud of the wise ways our community uses water, that in honor of National Drinking Water Week we would like to recognize local citizens and businesses for what they do to save water. If you know of someone who is particularly water conscious, or a business that demonstrates excellent water conservation practices let us know, via email (abarton@acsanet.com) or phone 434.977.4511 ext. 120. We would like to share some of those stories in this column on Sunday May 9th. Deadline for submission of entries is Friday, April 30, 2004. The best story wins a free rain barrel.