

The Water Connection

Fall 2006

The newsletter for Concord Water customers

Take the Community Conservation Challenge!



Attention leaders of community organizations and non-profit associations:
Are you looking for a fun and profitable fundraiser that will benefit your members as well as the entire community?
Have we got an opportunity for you!

The Community Conservation Challenge is an innovative project created by Concord Public Works to raise awareness about the importance of water conservation and provide an extra incentive for water customers to become more water-efficient.

CPW is looking for community groups to form teams of Concord water customers who are interested in saving water. The water use of all team members will be tracked from May through October 2007. At the end of the tracking period, the teams' recorded water use will be compared with their average water use over the same period from the past three years. If they used less water in 2007, they will earn money for their organization.

For every one percentage point of water savings, a team will earn \$2 per member to go towards their organization. For example: if a team of 20 uses 10 percent less water in 2007 than their previous three-year's average, it will earn \$400. The team will earn \$600 if its members reduce their water use by 15 percent.

Eligible team members can earn even more money by donating their toilet rebates to their organization. Up to \$100 can be rebated by replacing old toilets with new, low-flow models.

During the Challenge, there will be numerous opportunities to learn how to become water-efficient through water-use audits, workshops and presentations. To learn more, visit www.ConservationChallenge.org or contact Water Conservation Coordinator Joanne Bissetta at (978) 318-3259 or joanneb@concordnet.org.

By signing up to participate in the Community Conservation Challenge, your group has the opportunity to raise funds while conserving water and saving money on water bills. With the Community Conservation Challenge, the more you conserve the more you earn.

The Community Conservation Challenge is funded in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust. ♠

Supply-Side Water Conservation

Our customers play an important role in conserving Concord's water resources. But did you know that a lot of "conservation" happens before water reaches your home or business?

Every year Concord Public Works submits a report detailing our water use statistics to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. One of the more important items in this report is the difference between how much water we pump and how much we bill our customers for. This is referred to as unaccounted-for water. A high percentage can indicate poorly calibrated meters, theft of water, or leaks in our system.

Every month we review the amount of water pumped from our wells and compare it to the amount of water billed to our customers. This provides a quick check to identify potential problems with leaks in the system or inaccurate meters.

In years that our unaccounted-for water is greater than 10%, system-wide leak detection is performed to identify leaky water mains.

We have recently completed a meter replacement program, as over time water meters become less accurate. We also annually calibrate the "master" meters at our wells; meters of large water users are periodically checked to further ensure accuracy.

Another area where we are responsible for conserving

Continued on next page



Concord Public Works Water and Sewer Division

135 Keyes Road, Concord, MA 01742
(978) 318-3250

www.concordnet.org/cpw

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Keeping Stormwater Clean Helps Everyone

Did you know that stormwater is a natural resource? When managed properly, it can help recharge underground drinking water supplies and keep pollutants out of area wetlands and waterways. When poorly managed, stormwater can degrade water resources.

Stormwater runoff begins as rain and melted snow flowing over land and roadways. Along the way, it picks up many pollutants in its path—sediment, oil and grease, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, and other contaminants. This runoff flows into the Town's storm drainage system and eventually ends up being discharged to local rivers, streams, and ponds.

Water resources we use for recreation and drinking water can be negatively affected by contaminated runoff.

One of the goals of Concord's stormwater and drainage program is to prevent pollutants from accumulating in the Town's drainage system. Much of this work is accomplished through yearly upgrades to the Town's infrastructure.

In addition, there are several ways homeowners and business owners can improve stormwater quality. Eliminating storm runoff from private properties to local roads is an excellent way to keep pollutants out of the Town's drainage system. Picking up after your pet is another way for residents can help. Also, never dump motor oil, gasoline, paint and other liquid contaminants onto the ground or into storm drains.

For more information, contact Concord's Stormwater and Drainage Program Manager Sean Divoll, P.E. at (978) 318-3210. 💧

EPA Launches WaterSense

WaterSense, a new water efficiency program launched by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this summer, will educate consumers on making smart water choices that save money and maintain high environmental standards without compromising performance.

"WaterSense advances cooperative conservation goals by spreading the ethic of water efficiency and promoting the tools to make wise water choices," says EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson.

Similar to the Energy Star program, the WaterSense label will be easily identified on products and services that perform at least 20 percent more efficiently than their less efficient counterparts.

The first two items that will see the WaterSense label are high-efficiency toilets (toilets with a maximum flush of 1.28 gallons) and irrigation products and services.

Products will be tested to ensure EPA specifications and performance standards are met. These products will be available early next year. 💧

Conservation *from page 1*

water is by monitoring our own use. This includes measuring and documenting how much water we use to "produce" clean drinking water from mixing water treatment chemicals to flushing out dead end pipes. Our annual spring and fall flushing program is adjusted each year to prevent unnecessary use of water.

Water use from fire hydrants is also monitored to account for water that is not billed to customers but we know has been used. Some of this is allowed and documented; but water is also taken from fire hydrants without permission for various uses. Not only is this stealing, but it can damage the water system and cause water quality disturbances. 💧

Money-Saving Tips From Concord Water

Use Your Water Meter to Track Use

A water meter measures the amount of water entering your home. Most water meters are located in basements near the wall closest to the street. They can also be in a utility closet, mechanical room or outside in a pit in the ground. In Concord, the meters measure water use in cubic feet (CF). One cubic foot equals 7.48 gallons.

You can use your meter to track water usage throughout the day or week to determine when a lot of water is being used.

Your water meter can also help you determine whether your water-using appliances and fixtures have "silent" leaks.

Turn off all faucets and water-using items both inside and outdoors. This includes icemakers in refrigerators.

Check your meter. The little black or red triangle or the red needle that rotates are low-flow indicators, or "leak detectors" that sense very low amounts of water passing through the meter. You have a leak if the leak detector is moving. You may also want to jot down the meter reading numbers and check back 30 to 60 minutes later (don't use any water). If the second reading is higher, you probably have a leak.

Top culprits for leaks are toilets and irrigation systems. The American Water Works Association estimates that up to 25% of toilets in the U.S. leak. These leaks range from several gallons to more than 100 gallons per day. Call CPW at (978) 318-3259 for a free toilet leak detection kit.

Leaks in irrigation systems are tougher to uncover, since they often occur underground. Every year residents request hundreds of dollars worth of water bill abatements from the Public Works Commission due to leaks or other malfunctions in irrigation systems. 💧