

You, Your Community And Water

Guy Temple
 Union Co.
 Extension Agent

What would you do if you have no water available at your home tomorrow morning? No shower, no brushing of teeth, no shaving, not even a cup of coffee to calm your concern?

Although water is essential for life, most of us take it for granted. We view water as an inexpensive and unlimited resource. We are satisfied as long as an unlimited supply of good quality water is available.

However, water supplies in this country are no longer unlimited. In many parts of the country, future water supplies are uncertain and growing water development costs have become an obstacle to expanding water supplies.

The severe lack of water in California is the present prime example. You are probably not concerned because it does not effect you. However, if it continues, it will definitely effect all of us in this country who eat — in my book that means a majority anyway. A lot of the fresh produce we all take for granted throughout the year comes from irrigated farms in California. Farms are being rationed this year and that will mean less fresh produce in the supermarket.

What are your local officials doing about future water supplies? Maybe you should ask your township or borough officials the next time you see them. They are ultimately responsible for a continuing supply of water for all of us,

and there are some definite steps that can be taken to promote and insure conservation of water.

When the Municipal Planning Code was updated a few years ago, water-related articles were added. Article 3, Section 301, indicates that a comprehensive plan may include a plan for a reliable water supply. Article 5, Section 503.1, relating to subdivision and land development, indicates that every ordinance adopted shall include a provision, unless water is being supplied by private wells owned and maintained by the individual owner, indicating how and who will provide water to the development.

There are several reasons why we all should be conserving water. It will reduce impacts on our environment. Citizens and government are becoming sensitive to the negative impacts of new water development projects on the environment, when new dams for additional water are proposed. Water conservation programs could minimize or even avoid such impacts and also delay the need for the creation of "new" water supplies.

Reducing per capita water consumption will reduce the amount of sewage produced and increase the life and capacity of sewage treatment plants. Individual home owners on septic systems can also benefit from conserving water by reducing the hydraulic load on overloaded or improperly designed systems, thus postponing the need to incur extensive replacement costs.

Many communities have sew-

age treatment plants that are or are near to being overloaded. DER often imposes sewer hookup moratoriums on these communities. These moratoriums prevent additional housing construction activities from taking place, therefore effectively stopping growth. An overall reduction in water use would mean more homes could be built in a given area without adding sewage treatment plant capacity.

Another reason to conserve water is to lower overall government capital costs. Water systems include costly water treatment plants, pumping plants, reservoirs, and piping. Reduction in water use would delay the enlargement of these facilities.

Energy savings can also be substantial for both those on community water systems and those who have on-lot wells. Most water supplies use energy for pumping. In addition, most homeowners use more energy to heat the water. Saving water will save energy, which in turn will save money on water heating bills as well as on municipal costs.

The major reasons leading to community water conservation programs are drought, major water shortages because of pollution of an aquifer, rapid growth in an area,

equipment failure, and sewer hookup moratoriums.

The new role envisioned for water conservation programs is an integral part of long-term resource planning during non-crisis situations. From this perspective, water conservation might be more appropriately termed "water demand management" in contrast to our present "water supply management." This strategy envisions conservation programs as a means of reducing demand versus a traditional water resource program which seeks to supply all the water the public wants.

Public officials at all levels of government are becoming convinced of the importance of community-level water conservation programs to reduce the demand on the nation's water resources. Various strategies can be used as part of a community water conservation program. These include:

- Public consumer education programs indicating the rationale behind proposed actions and monetary benefits to the consumer.

- Initiate a program of water conservation in all public facilities such as schools, colleges, hospitals, prisons, and municipal buildings, including a leak detection program, and metering and refitting of public buildings with water saving devices in older plumbing

fixtures.

- Pass ordinances regulating outdoor water use and encourage water efficient landscaping.

- Plan workshops for plumbers, builders, hardware owners, and others on the need for water saving equipment.

- Amend building codes to require water saving equipment in new construction.

- Look at water rates structure revisions.

- Identify high water users in the commercial and industrial sector and approach them with specific water conservation plans for their facilities. These facilities could be hotels, motels, restaurants, car washes, and industrial plants.

- Plan a community wide refitting program to encourage water-saving devices, including toilet displacement bottles, flow control aerators, shower flow controls, etc.

All of the above information is detailed in a Penn State University bulletin, "A Guide to Designing A Community Water Conservation Program." Water conservation strategies, sources of water information, and sources of water conservation equipment are all discussed.

The guide should be of interest and value to water utilities, planners, environmental and citizens organizations, and individuals concerned with increasing the efficiency of our water systems.

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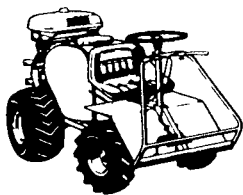
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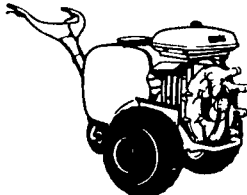
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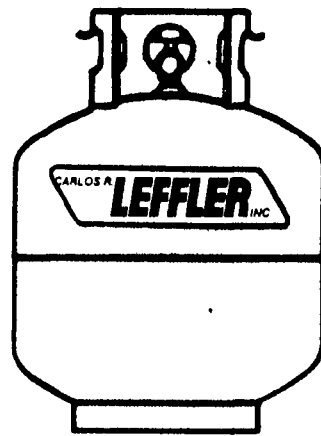
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