

IWVWD General Manager's Column
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“Make Conservation One of Your New Year's Resolutions”

By Don Zdeba

Winter has officially come to the Indian Wells Valley and the holidays are now behind us. On behalf of all of us at the Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD), I hope that the holiday season was a memorable one and wish everyone a safe, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

The New Year is traditionally the time to challenge ourselves with goals designed to achieve improvement in some facet of our life. Perhaps one resolution we all can consider this year is how to be more conscious of our water use. More and more, water issues have become popular topics in the media throughout the United States, but especially here in California.

Most of us probably think the major use of water in this country is related to agriculture. It might surprise you to know that agriculture is actually the second largest user. According to a 2010 study conducted for the California Homebuilding Foundation, the largest use for water in the United States is for the cooling towers of power plants. Together, cooling towers (47%) and agriculture/irrigation (34%) account for 81% of all domestic water use. Water use by public water suppliers such as IWVWD accounts for just 11%. Obviously, there isn't much you or I can do about the 81%, but we all can have an impact on the 11% used for residential supplies. If you don't think improvement is possible, consider California, at 203 gallons per capita per day, has the 15th highest per capita public water use in the country. Higher rates are typically found in the south and west where home sites are on average larger, temperatures are warmer, and the growing season can be year round.

Here in the Indian Wells Valley, winter is the time when our water use is at its lowest. Landscape irrigation can be significantly decreased as plants go dormant and there is no need for evaporative coolers which can use a steady stream of water during the hot summer months. Now is a good time to consider other residential water uses and look for opportunities to be even more efficient.

For example, did you know the average top loading washing machine typically uses between 40 and 45 gallons per wash while a front loading machine uses between 15 and 30 gallons? As focus has increased on water conservation, standards for fixtures in residences have changed over the years resulting in significant water savings. Since 1975, standards for shower heads have reduced the flow rate from 3.5 gallons per minute (gpm) to 2.0 gpm. For a family of four, each showering once a day for five minutes, that can result in saving 10,950 gallons of water each year. During this same time, toilet efficiency has improved from 5 gallons per flush to about 1.3 gallons. Flow rates for faucet aerators declined from 2.5 gpm to 1.8 gpm. If your fixtures and appliances are ten

years or older, you can achieve a significant savings over the course of a year simply by updating them.

California has well over 7,500,000 single family homes. More than half of these were built prior to 1980 when plumbing standards were first introduced. The Indian Wells Valley is no exception. So you can see there may be quite a potential for increasing efficiency and saving our precious water source. Take a look around your home and see if you can identify sources for savings. In many cases the savings that can be achieved can quickly offset the cost of the upgrade. If you need more conservation tips, check the District's web site or pick up some of the literature available at our office. We also have free water savings devices such as low capacity shower heads and hose nozzles at our Customer Service counter.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to serve you and remind you we are here to assist with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your service. Again, Happy New Year to you and yours.