

Are We Running Out of Water?

by Diane Beyer
District Manager / Conservation Specialist



Stafford County recently implemented fairly strict mandatory water restrictions because of the extremely dry conditions in Virginia in 2007. I also read that they are considering purchasing water from the City or Spotsylvania County because they only have about 100 days of water available. How often does this happen and will we really run out of water? What can residents do to conserve water, even at this late stage?

First, let's look at how much of the Earth's water is usable by humans. The chart below was surprising to me, even though I've seen it before. It's always an eye opener to realize just how precious and rare our drinking water really is.

The illustration below will show how the increased demand for potable water draws down the all important ground water table. As development increases and water resources do not, we must realize that we are all vying for the same .3% and must learn to work together to optimize what we have available.

Knowing now that water resources are at a premium in an ideal environment, it is understandable that drought conditions increase the concern we feel. Droughts are natural occurrences and their severity depends on the degree of moisture deficiency in the soil, duration and the size of the area affected.

There are four different types of defined drought:

- Meteorological precipitation less than normal for an area. This type of drought is relative; what is considered a drought in one part of the country/world, may not be considered a drought in another.
- Agricultural situation in which the soil moisture no longer meets the needs of planted crops
- Hydrological when surface and subsurface water supplies are below normal
- Socioeconomic situation when physical water shortages start to affect human populations

This year's drought would qualify in all four areas.

So, what can you do to conserve? The amount of water we all use every day may surprise you! Once you see where the water is being used, it's easy to practice conservation. Water use inside the home varies from household to household, individual to individual.

Activity	Gallons Used	% Per Day Total
Toilets	19.3	26.0
Clothes Washer	16.8	22.7
Showers	13.2	17.8
Faucets	11.4	15.4
Leaks	9.4	12.7
Other domestic use	1.6	2.1
Baths	1.3	1.8
Dish washer	1.0	1.4

For specific ways you can conserve water, visit our website:

tccswcd.vaswcd.org/water-saving-tips.htm



**Tri-County/City
Soil & Water Conservation District**
4805 Carr Drive
Fredericksburg, VA 22408

fax: (540) 899-2014
Questions? Call (540) 899-9492, ext 117