

# ***Septic system health - a good reason to conserve water***

Dear Valued Customer:

It doesn't take a meteorologist to convince anyone locally that its been a wet year so far. One only needs to look down at the puddles and ponds of water to see we have been getting an unusual amount of rainfall. While the additional rain that gets into the ground will be welcomed as recharge for groundwater levels and summer stream flows, it can also present a very serious problem for septic systems. We are sending you a conservation message early this year to provide you the following important advice from Jefferson County Environmental Health:

With the prolonged wet weather comes challenges for your septic drainfield. Soggy soil cannot disperse the liquids entering your drainfield from your septic tank as well as in dry conditions. If you notice sewage smell, very squishy soil or pooling of water around your septic system, have a professional check it out and stop using water immediately. Keep kids and pets away from the area.

Using less water will help your drainfield anytime of year. Use low flow appliances, space laundry loads through the week, and fix dripping faucets. Consider renting a portable toilet for big gatherings.

**Challenge:** A leaky toilet can waste about 200 gallons of water every day. If you live with a septic system, that could mean your whole daily allotment. You might be headed for septic failure.

**Solution:** To tell if your toilet has a leak, place a drop of food coloring in the tank; if the color shows in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak.

Get to know your septic professional, have them keep an eye on your septic system, at least once a year for systems with a pump, and every 3 years for conventional gravity septics.

As always, **CONSERVATION MATTERS!** We need our customers to use common sense conservation practices so we can maintain water levels in our wells and in our streams – and so you can maintain a healthy drainfield. Wise water use takes pressure off of our wells and translates into lower water bills for you. It makes good sense for everyone and the environment, even in a wet year.

***USE WATER WISELY!***

Please see the water conservation tips on back for guidance:

# ***WATER CONSERVATION TIPS***

## ***INDOOR USE***

- Wash only full loads in washing machine and dishwasher.
- Don't run water continuously when washing dishes by hand.
- Attach "low-flow" faucet aerators to faucets.
- Take short showers instead of baths. A full bathtub requires about 36 gallons of water. A five-minute shower using a flow restrictor will use just 15 to 25 gallons.
- Install "low-flow" shower heads and toilets.
- Don't leave the water running when brushing your teeth or shaving. With the tap running at full force, shaving takes 20 gallons of water, teeth-brushing takes 10 and hand washing takes two.
- Check for leaky faucets and toilets, and then repair them immediately. A leaky tap, dripping once per second, wastes six gallons of water a day. The PUD has FREE toilet leak detection kits available at the office.

## ***OUTDOOR USE***

- Aerating your yard once a year also will help it retain water.
- Don't run water continuously when washing your car. Use a nozzle on the hose to stop the water flow between rinsings. Clean the car with a pail of soapy water.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks.
- Improve the soil structure - work organic material such as peat moss or compost into the soil to help retain water and assist in plant growth.
- Plan before you plant - consider plant needs for moisture, sunlight, etc. in advance.
- Cut down on grass - grass requires up to four times as much water as other plants. Cut back on the amount of grass in your yard by planting shrubs or ground cover or putting in rock gardens.
- Water efficiently - use a sprinkler with a low application rate (about one-third inch per hour) and check for even coverage. Established grass only needs an inch of water each week.
- Water your lawn in the evenings or early mornings to reduce evaporation.
- When you do water, water long enough for moisture to soak down to the roots where it will do the most good.
- Make the most of mulches - three to four inches of mulch on top of the soil, especially before spring and fall rains, will reduce water needs, moderate soil temperature and inhibit weed growth.
- Choose climate friendly plants - many native plants can survive on rainwater alone, and they're more disease and insect resistant.
- Care for what you plant - weed and prune regularly to ensure water is going where it's needed.

(water conservation tips used by permission from Clark County PUD#1)

For more links to water conservation info please see our website at [www.jeffpud.org](http://www.jeffpud.org). Contact for this flier and information is the PUD's Resource Manager, Bill Graham. Feel free to contact him at 385-5800 ext 302 or via email at [bgraham@jeffpud.org](mailto:bgraham@jeffpud.org).

***THANK YOU FOR HELPING US CONSERVE OUR WATER RESOURCES.***