Water Conservation Fact Sheet

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE DELAWARE ESTUARY INC.

DELAWARE ESTUARY PROGRAM

What is the Delaware Estuary?

The Delaware Estuary is located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, surrounded by portions of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. An estuary is where fresh water from a river mixes with salt water from an ocean or bay. Estuaries are fragile ecosystems, which support some of the Earth's richest and most productive habitats. The Delaware Estuary stretches approximately 134 miles, from the falls of the Delaware River between Trenton, New Jersey and Morrisville, Pennsylvania, south to the mouth of the Delaware Bay between Cape May, New Jersey and Cape Henlopen, Delaware.

For more information:

www.epa.gov (search water conservation)
www.state.nj.us/drbc/ (search water conservation)
www.dep.state.pa.us (search water conservation)

Fact: *The Delaware River supplies water for 17.5 million people in New York City, Philadelphia and hundreds of communities along the river and its tributaries.*

Why is water conservation important to the Delaware Estuary?

The Delaware Estuary is an ecosystem. This means any actions within that system affect the entire system. Water conservation is a good example. The Delaware River supplies 17.5 million people with their drinking water and is relied upon by industry for operations and manufacturing. It is also home to thousands of species, including the horseshoe crab, oysters, and shad, and is a stopover for thousands of migrating shorebirds. This shared use of the Estuary means a shared responsibility as well.

Our water supply depends on sufficient downriver flow of fresh water to prevent the ocean's salty water from creeping up into the northern reaches of the Estuary. When this happens, vital ground and surface water supplies can become contaminated. This, along with salt contamination of surface water intakes, puts drinkable water supplies in the Estuary at risk. When low flow during drought is further reduced by withdrawals by thirsty communities, everyone must conserve together to protect the integrity of the water supply.

How can you help to conserve water?

How we use water in our homes, yards, and workplaces can really make a difference. Conservation practices need not be expensive, difficult, or inconvenient, but they do mean simple changes to everyday habits – becoming aware of water and how we use it. By saving water, you will protect the environment, and you will also save money on your water bill. Although your savings might be small, if everyone helped to conserve water, the combined effort would be huge.

Here's how you can help:

1. Check for leaks in faucets, toilets, hoses and pipes.

A steady drip wastes up to 20 gallons a day, and a leaky toilet can waste 100 gallons! That's more than 30,000 gallons per year. To check for leaks, turn off everything that uses water. Record the reading on your water meter. If after 20 minutes the reading has changed, you have a leak somewhere. Toilets are prime suspects. To check, drop food coloring into the tank. If after a few minutes color appears in the bowl – you have a leak.

2. Install low water use devices which save both water and money.

Some options include:

- Installing an aerator on each faucet and a low flow showerhead to reduce flow by 50 – 75%;
- Purchasing a suds saver washing machine and a low consumption model toilet;
- Putting a quart plastic bottle filled with sand or stones in your toilet tank to displace and save many gallons a day. Just be sure it's not in the way of your flush mechanism.

3. Change your water use habits by simply being careful.

You can save without inconvenience or expense by trying these ideas in your home:

Bathroom

- Don't use toilets as ashtrays or trashcans. Each unnecessary flush wastes water.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Take showers instead of baths.
- Try shorter showers, and turn off the water while shampooing.

Laundry

- Wash full loads whenever possible.

Kitchen

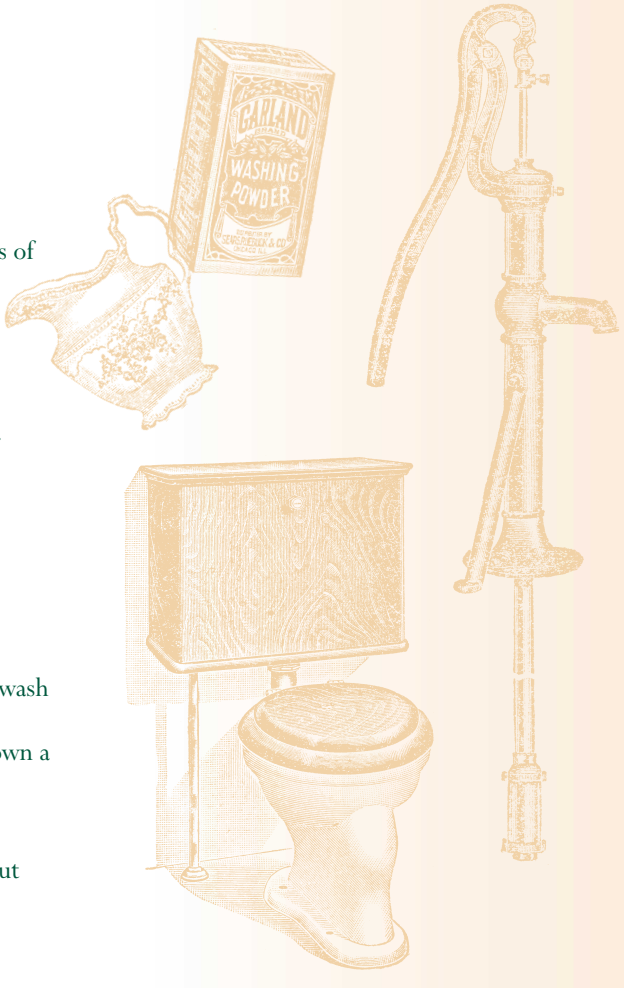
- Use your dishwasher only when it's full.
- Rinse dishes in a pan instead of running water.
- Keep drinking water in the fridge instead of running water until it's cold.
- Add garbage to the trash instead of using a garbage disposal, which use lots of water and add unnecessary solids to waste systems.

Outdoors

- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks.
- Keep your grass 2-3 inches high to retain moisture.
- Water your lawn in the morning or evening to prevent excess evaporation. This also helps protect foliage and flowers from scorching.
- Plant vegetation that is native to the Estuary. It will withstand drought conditions and require less watering than non-native species.
- Use low-pressure, perforated hoses for watering instead of sprinklers.
- Form ditches around plants to prevent runoff.
- Use mulch to reduce evaporation.
- Don't use sprinklers and hoses for play.
- Use an automatic shut-off on hoses when washing cars, or take it to a car wash that recycles water.
- Let car wash water drain to the lawn or garden instead of to a gutter or down a storm drain.

Community

- Respect any water use restrictions your community water authority may put in place.



Funding for this fact sheet was provided by U. S. EPA, Region III.

Printed on recycled paper. 1/02