

Strait Talk July 2010 Water Conservation

It seems the rains have abated so it's a good time to talk about water conservation! Across our region and around the world, concerns about water quality, supply, and demand are rising. Driven by population increase, over consumption, and climate change, water has become a real concern. In our rainy climate with aquifers, creeks, and lakes for our water needs, it may seem that water conservation isn't necessary. So why does the SCR D put such emphasis on it? Are we running out of water? Not yet! The 2,560 millimetres (100 inches) of rain the Sunshine Coast receives annually comes mostly in Fall and Winter when water demands are lowest. On a typical summer day we use up to three times more water than in the winter months, exceeding what our treatment systems can process. By moderating our water consumption, we delay costly infrastructure upgrades and save money. Water conservation reduces the risk of running out of water in summer, ensures sufficient fire fighting capacity during drought periods, and maintains water flow in streams to protect salmon and other aquatic habitats. In addition, it reduces operating and maintenance costs at both water and waste treatment facilities and the major capital expense of expanding the capacity of these systems. Our population is growing and total demand for water is increasing. Climate change is also altering the seasonal frequency and intensity of precipitation patterns affecting water stores in our watersheds.

The SCR D sees water conservation as the cheapest and most effective way to protect our water supply and offers one of the most generous rebate programs in Canada. Toilets consume a lot of water! Consider replacing your old toilet (13l) for a high-efficiency 4.8l unit through the SCR D's toilet replacement program. Low flow shower heads and aerators are also available to properties served by SCR D water. Because of the bathroom fixture replacement and toilet rebate programs, we save over 374,203 cubic meters of water annually, the equivalent of 149 Olympic sized pools or enough to supply 777 households with water for a year! Each summer the SCR D hires a university student water conservation assistant whose focus is community outreach and education. Dayton Skei is available for individual enquiries and at public events to share information about the SCR D toilet rebate and bathroom fixture programs. Dayton also helps with enforcement of watering restrictions.

These programs have helped save water year round. But the biggest strain on our water infrastructure is during the dry summer months when people use more water outside for gardens, lawns, car washing, etc. Please help us save water by respecting the watering restrictions, sweeping not washing your driveway and using an automatic hose shut off while car washing. Another thing to consider is rainwater collection for garden or even indoor use The SCR D Board supports the installation of rainwater systems by waiving permit fees, but please talk to the building department before you begin a project. And consult the SCR D website or pick up our new water conservation brochure to find out more about water conservation and how you can help.