

Mayor's Report on Water Stewardship Part 2- Conservation

As I indicated in the last Mayor's Report, one of the water stewardship measures which is most popular and cost effective is the conservation of existing water supplies. The greatest advantage of this measure is that every one of us can do it on a daily basis. Nothing is required except an awareness of a limited resource, a will to exercise self discipline in daily habits (shorter showers, not leaving the water running, etc.), and the use of drought-resistant landscaping methods whenever possible.

Just to give you an idea of how much water is used by various trees in the area, a mature ponderosa pine can use approximately 300 gallons per day (about the same as a family of four in a standard home). A mature cottonwood, on the other hand, can use as much as 100 gallons per hour under ideal conditions. Like cottonwoods, elm trees are also big water users. One of our local residents pointed out that marijuana plants only use about six gallons of water per day, but shading your home with them would probably be a poor idea.

Conservation of water is an excellent goal to strive for, but it must be balanced with individual liberty and quality of life. For example: utilizing concrete slabs and underground cisterns instead of trees and flowers would greatly reduce our impact on the aquifer, but it would be a sterile environment indeed. Our scenic Verde River would deliver a lot more water to Arizona's lake systems if the cottonwood trees were gone, but the aesthetic value of the trees make the water loss a price most Arizonans are willing to pay.

We can enjoy quality of life and still conserve water if we utilize some basic principles coupled with old-fashioned common sense. After all- we are all in this together.

Chris Marley, Mayor of Chino Valley