

## **Are you a water hog?**

**By Andrea Gimlin**

The key principles of water as a natural resource are simple:

- access to water is a basic human right
- water is a finite resource, degradable and irreplaceable
- the availability of fresh water is subject to nature's laws

When you look out over the mountains and valleys of Watauga County, there appears to be plenty of water. It seems to gush from every mountainside. However, after a recent study, the Town of Boone discovered that its potable water supply is decreasing.

Boone's future water security relies on strong citizen involvement and knowledge to reach its new goal of water conservation. This is why the Boone Town Council recently approved the implementation of a Water Conservation Educational Program.

The Town of Boone is encouraging people in the community to perform a "Do-It-Yourself Water Conservation Audit." A water "audit" is a review of water-use patterns, water fixtures, appliances, etc. to find ways to conserve water and reduce monthly water and sewer bills.

If you complete the home water audit survey and turn it in, the town will give you a free water conservation kit. The kit includes a low-flow shower head, faucet aerators, leak detection tablets, and a toilet displacement bag. This offer applies to Town of Boone water customers only. If you aren't a Town of Boone water customer, you can still get a kit for \$5.95. Contact Andrea Gimlin, Coordinator of the Town of Boone Water Conservation Program at 828-262-2584 or [andrea.gimlin@townofboone.net](mailto:andrea.gimlin@townofboone.net)

Here are a number of ways you can be water wise:

- Check your water meter and bill to track your water usage
- Pick up the phone and report water losses from broken pipes, open hydrants, and errant sprinklers
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water
- When you shop for a new appliance, consider one offering cycle and load size adjustments
- Put food coloring in your toilet tank. If it seeps into the toilet bowl before flushing, you have a leak. It's easy to fix, and you can save more than 600 gallons a month
- Be sure your toilet flapper doesn't stay open after flushing
- Place a bottle filled with water in your toilet tank to cut down on the amount of water used for each flush
- We're likely to notice leaky faucets indoors, but also check outdoor faucets, pipes, and hoses for leaks

- Time your shower to keep it under 5 minutes. You'll save up to 1,000 gallons a month
- Turn off water while you brush your teeth, shave, or lather your hands. You can save 4 gallons a minute
- Run your dishwasher and washing machine only when full, and you could save 1,000 gallons a month
- Install a low-flow showerhead. They can save more than 500 gallons a week
- Use a commercial car wash that recycles water
- Make sure there are aerators on all faucets
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway or sidewalk
- Wash your car in the grass instead of on concrete so that water can infiltrate back into the ground rather than go down the stormdrain
- Collect natural water with a rain barrel for lawn and garden watering
- Use one glass for your drinking water each day. It will minimize the use of your dishwasher

Source: Town of Boone Public Utilities Department, [www.townofboone.net](http://www.townofboone.net)