

# Water Wise

## Let's learn more, as a region, about conserving

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Here's the situation: North Texas is likely to grow from 9 million people today to 13 million in 2060. All those Texans will need water, and they're not going to find it because of some divining rod. The region needs to work every angle, including controlling the demand for water.

That's why it's troubling to learn that Highland Park and Addison are falling way behind regional conservation goals. *The Dallas Morning News'* Kristen Holland reported recently that per capita water use in those communities in 2003 was twice that of other towns in North Texas' 16 counties. (Addison officials say 2005 data show that while the city uses more water than the average of other North Texas towns, it is no longer twice the others' rate.)

Addison's restaurants and offices and Highland Park's lawns and pools are the culprits. Since we all love restaurants, jobs, lawns and a swim, there's no use wagging our fingers at their existence. The trick is finding ways to enjoy them without wasting water.

Starting Jan. 1, Highland Park will require residents to install sensors on their sprinklers. No more automatic systems going off in the rain. That's great, although enforcement is the key.

Highland Park also needs graduated water rates. The city is creating a rate for users who exceed 12,000 gallons per month from June to November. But Dallas and other cities employ stair-stepped rates that increase with the amount residents consume. Highland Park could help North Texas' future by going that route.

Addison is a different story. The city attracts people for dining and entertainment, not so much to live. That makes it harder to get at individual users.

Still, Addison is trying. On Tuesday, Addison City Council members will consider hiking its two water rates. The council could help the region by approving the stiffer charges, while also creating graduated rates.

Back in the '50s, local leaders planned well for our water needs. It only makes sense for us to follow their lead and plan ahead ourselves.