

WFAA-TV Dallas/Fort Worth

## Cities found breaking water conservation laws

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Despite the public being asked to do more to conserve water, not every city is doing its part.

In fact, News 8 has found some cities where citizens use water extravagantly, and some local governments that are actually breaking the law themselves.

Around the state, North Texas is being called a water hog, vilified for lavishly watering yards, without a care for where the water is coming from.

Highland Park residents are not helping the situation.

Last year, investment-banker, John Muse, used enough water on his grounds to fill nine Olympic swimming pools.

Westover Hills, outside Fort Worth, is the richest city in Texas and records show it also uses the most water.

This community, where some lots cover almost 30 acres, uses six and a half times more water than the state average.

When asked by News 8, for a list of its top users, officials said they have no such list.

So are Westover Hills residents being asked to use less water?

"Not directly. When we see someone watering at the wrong time, we let them know about it," said an official.

He said he will bring the issue to the mayor and council.

Michael Banks lives two hours east in Jacksonville, Texas.

He's fighting an effort to drown the Neches River, turn it into the Fastrill Reservoir, and pipe the water to customers in the Dallas-area.

"It's not a necessity for them to have the water," he said.

"If Dallas were to conserve water, they wouldn't need Fastrill Reservoir," he said.

Dallas says it's getting much better at conservation.

"We're using less water per person than we ever have before," said Charles Stringer from Dallas Water Utilities.

For Dallas, that's true but for other cities, it's impossible to tell.

While communities crack down on how much water you use, News 8 has found ten cities that have failed to report to the state how much water they're using.

The information is critical for future water planning.

Failure to report is against the law.

A person who fails to complete and return the survey commits an offense that is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor.

During a time when McKinney's population and water use were exploding, it failed to turn in a water report - seven years in a row.

The mayor, and other regional leaders, says many communities have reduced waste.

So are the people in the region using water responsibly?

"It's my belief that they are," said Jim Parks, Region C Water Board

But clearly not all of them and even some local governments have failed to play by all the rules.

It all raises a basic question: doesn't North Texas need to get this right before going after someone else's water?

"They shouldn't take our natural resources here, so that they can have water to waste. That's not right," said Banks.

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