

# Star-Telegram

## Public campaign aims to make residents aware of water conservation effort

**BY BILL HANNA**

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There are signs that water conservation efforts by the Tarrant Regional Water District and area cities are starting to take hold.

But water providers caution that it will take continued public awareness campaigns to change the long-held habits of many North Texas water users.

Over the next month, the district will be rolling out its annual joint marketing campaign with Dallas that includes television commercials, newspaper ads, billboards and social media to get out the message to save water during the hot summer months. The water district spends \$1 million annually to promote water conservation, up from \$50,000 in 2005.

Anything that can be done to lessen water usage postpones the need for expensive projects like the proposed Marvin Nichols reservoir in Northeast Texas, said Linda Christie, the water district's government and community relations director.

"We've got good momentum going, and we're not going to draw back," Christie said. "Anything we can do to conserve water, to get more out of our water supply, delays building Marvin Nichols and delays other expensive projects."

### **Saving water indoors**

This year's ads will continue to focus on reducing outdoor watering but will also stress ways to save water indoors by fixing leaky faucets or replacing old toilets, Christie said.

Commercial and residential usage among the water district's primary customers -- including Fort Worth, Arlington, Mansfield and the Trinity River Authority -- dropped about 10.8 percent from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2009. That translates to overall usage of 164.6 gallons per capita day, a daily decrease of 20 gallons per capita over 2008.

Residential water usage, where Dallas and Fort Worth have often been criticized as water hogs by environmental groups, showed Fort Worth at 83 gallons per capita daily in 2009, down from 93 gallons in 2008. In 2007, residential use in Fort Worth was 82 per gallons per capita daily, said Mary Gugliuzza, a spokeswoman for the Fort Worth Water Department. Wet conditions played a factor in both 2009 and 2007.

Gugliuzza said year-round restrictions against watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. have had an impact.

"I think we're beginning to see the behavior change for most folks," Gugliuzza said. "But behavior change takes awhile. We are still trying to change behavior for many on no watering between 10 and 6."

### **Ambitious goals**

The Sierra Club and the National Wildlife Federation did an analysis of Texas cities' water usage in March and praised Fort Worth and Arlington for its toilet replacement programs but said both cities should set more ambitious goals.

"I think water suppliers in Dallas and Fort Worth are headed in the right direction," said Ken Kramer, state director of the Sierra Club in Texas. "They're beginning to show some progress, but they still have a long way to go."

Raising the amount of money dedicated to toilet replacements in Fort Worth is unlikely. Final budgets for fiscal year 2011 haven't been set in Fort Worth, but funds for toilet replacements are projected to be \$800,000, the same as in this year's budget. That would be enough to replace 7,416 toilets, but Gugliuzza cautions that nothing is set in next year's budget with Fort Worth facing budget cuts.

As for public awareness, Kramer would like to see a statewide effort similar to the "Don't Mess With Texas" campaign.

Christie opposes the idea, saying a "one-size-fits-all" approach will not work for water conservation. She argues that there are different issues for different regions and that rural areas are often dealing with groundwater while urban areas are dealing with surface water.

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