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THIS SUMMER, CONSIDER CONSERVATION OF WHIDBEY'S WATER RESOURCES

Growing up on Whidbey Island, I hold countless fond memories of summers spent in or near water, whether it be a picnic at the beach, swim lessons at the pool, or a refreshing dip in a few of our island's freshwater lakes. As an island, we all inhabit a geographic wonder when it comes to water. As Washington's longest island, shoreline is a prominent and expansive feature of our area, bordered by the rich salt waters of the Salish Sea. Straits, inlets, bays, lagoons, harbors, passages, and sounds all abound. Whidbey's freshwater, too, is special, originating from rainwater. Stored in several lakes, wetlands, and aquifers positioned throughout the island, and flowing through streams and marshes, water is a precious resource to us all. Isn't it amazing how many names exist to describe water? There are equal ways in which we can conserve it this summer.

On Whidbey, water is what connects us, ultimately. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to be reminded of this when I worked with Whidbey's next generation – this year's fifth graders at Coupeville Elementary School. They were on a culminating experience at Camp Cornet Bay Learning Center, and I had been invited to participate in an afternoon of educational workshops by offering one with the Whidbey Island Conservation District. The focus: linking student lives to the ecosystems around them, generating awareness. Going into the summer season, a topic came naturally to mind – water on Whidbey, and why should we consider conserving it. As a former fifth grader at Coupeville Elementary, it was a coming-full-circle experience, teaching the students, as well as learning from them, too, how Whidbey's water users have changed throughout history and what the future holds. Getting to know the next generation of this island made it even more clear to me the importance of water conservation. Like me, I hope these kids will return home someday as adults and be able to live a life similar to that which we enjoy today.

To balance or not to balance, that was the question of the afternoon. I asked the students to consider if ecosystems were always in balance, and within seconds I received a confident and firm "Of course not!" each time. But when prompted to answer "Are ecosystems striving to be in balance?" students reversed their tone and reflected almost always with "Why, yes." Balance changes over time, and when it comes to water conservation on Whidbey Island, our opportunity lies in the ability to adapt to our altering circumstances and respond in a way that sustains us all. Some of the larger challenges we are approaching take time, but even the simplest of action can make a difference if done by enough people enough times – and I hope, going into summer, you'll consider some of these ideas at your home, farm, or forest to help protect and improve our island's water resources, and perhaps

save some energy and money while you're at it!

Water Conservation Inside

- Learn how to read your water meter so that you can monitor for any changes, including leaks or breaks.
- When replacing appliances, consider water and energy efficient models. Consider a high-efficiency toilet or washing machine, as well as low-flow faucet fixtures.
- A dishwasher often uses less water than handwashing, especially if you have a full load and forgo a pre-rinse cycle. If handwashing, consider filling up a wash and a rinse tub to minimize how much time the tap is on.
- Try out a shorter shower and see how it feels! If you keep showers under 5 minutes, you'll save up to 1,000 gallons of water a month.
- When brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your hands, remember to turn off the faucet and you'll save up to 4 gallons every minute.

Water Conservation Outside

- For those who love to garden, consider installing a drip irrigation system to efficiently water your plants. Even an inexpensive timer can help reduce over-watering. Or opt for native and drought tolerant plants, which can make a beautiful alternative to unused turf areas in your yard and are available at local nurseries on the island. Go to <http://www.whidbeycd.org/drought-planting.html> to learn more.

- In seasons leading up to summer, collect rainwater using barrels or tanks for use around the yard. Check out <http://www.whidbeycd.org/rainwater--use-it-or-lose-it.html> for a set of instructions to build your own.

- In the summer months, let your lawn go dormant. Keep it mowed high at 2 ½ inches, to preserve moisture in the soil. This is a great way to save water, energy, and effort and it's natural for turf grass to turn golden brown in the summer.

- When washing your car, consider a commercial carwash that recycles its water or if at home, wash on a permeable surface (grass or gravel), and use a shut-off nozzle on the hose.

For more information and resources, and to learn more about the Whidbey Island Conservation District and its services available to you as a resident, visit www.whidbeycd.org or call toll free at (888) 678-4922.



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