



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Marion County Administration

Office of Public Information

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CAN WE REALLY “SAVE” WATER?

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Because water is a renewable resource—and seems so plentiful—you might wonder, “Why do we need to ‘save’ it? Won’t it always be there?” Yes, it’s true that thanks to the natural water cycle and modern wastewater treatment facilities, water can be purified and reused over and over. But that’s only part of the story. When we use water, we need to understand how our actions affect the water cycle and, ultimately, the availability and quality of water to people around us and downstream.



Water in lakes, reservoirs, and underground aquifers can behave like a finite resource and be depleted at alarming rates during periods of peak usage or drought. Under natural circumstances, the water cycle will recharge these types of water storage...eventually. Unfortunately, water use rapidly increases in the seasons when precipitation is at its lowest, and so water does not recharge quickly enough.

Here’s how it works: The water cycle is usually depicted on a global scale, but the cycle takes place on a much more localized level. Communities are typically connected by a common water source called a watershed. A watershed, also referred to as a drainage basin, is a region where all the water that falls on that land drains to a common source of water, such as a river, lake, or aquifer. Communities then access and distribute this water through a public supply system or individuals pump it from wells in a shared aquifer. Water managers maintain a delicate balance between the amount of water available from a given source and the number of customers they feel it can effectively supply.

Ideally, once an upstream community uses water in its homes, it can be treated and made available for another downstream community to use. But not all water continues downriver. As much as 50 percent of water used for lawn irrigation can be lost due to evaporation and overwatering, for example. And evaporated water can travel long distances before returning to the ground as rain, meaning when and where it will fall next continues as a time-worn guessing game.

As populations grow, aging water infrastructure can struggle to keep up with demand. Reducing water use through efficient technologies and tactics, such as installing WaterSense labeled plumbing fixtures or watering your lawn only when necessary, can ease the strain on supply and allow clean water to be shared effectively among more people. To understand that every drop indeed counts, consider that for every nine households that

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install WaterSense labeled toilets, enough water is saved to supply one more household in the community!

For more information, please visit the WaterSense Web site at: www.epa.gov/watersense.

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