

Acton Water District

Water Words Notice

Spring 2003

Practicing What We Preach

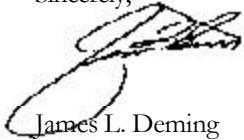
For the past four years those of us who are employed here at the Acton Water District have presented our customers with a variety of water conservation ideas, practices, and incentives. It is particularly gratifying to be able to report that many of you have listened. While we still have a long way to go, we now have some data that supports the fact that our - and your - efforts have worked. Our population base has increased, and yet our average daily usage has remained almost constant. Most importantly, our peak usage has been reduced dramatically. We are doing a better job of using our limited resource, water, in a more appropriate manor. We appreciate the efforts that many of you have made. Collectively, it is making a difference!

Recently, our Water Commissioners asked me how their household water usage compared to an "average" Acton household - they wanted to ensure that they were "practicing what they preach." It is critical to ensure that we, the Acton Water District function as efficiently as possible and are able to say with confidence that we too are doing our part when it comes to water conservation. It might be helpful to explain some of the efforts that the Acton Water District has made to reduce its own water usage.

First of all, we have cut in half our unaccounted-for-water use! This is the difference between the water that we pump out of the ground and the water that we sell. It is made up of water that is "lost" through leaks in the system, poorly maintained meters, and inadequate management systems. We have an outside expert in leak detection perform a bi-annual survey of our entire distribution system. When a leak is discovered, we repair it immediately. We have our large production meters tested annually and certified for accuracy, again by an outside expert in the field. We have an ongoing program of meter repair and replacement. We installed a state-of-the-art SCADA system to monitor all of our wells and treatment facilities and give us real-time information of the status of all of our operations. Over the past four years we have installed seven replacement wells. These are wells that replace an existing well and are located less than fifty feet from the original source. Over time, wells degrade both in water quality and in the amount of water that they can produce. Replacement wells are an effective and relatively inexpensive alternative to developing a new source. We concentrate our annual water main flushing effort in April when we have the most available water to use for that purpose. Finally, we individually do all we can to conserve water in our own homes. I am happy to report that each of our Commissioner's annual usage falls below Acton's average household usage!

We will continue to look for new and innovative ways to educate our customers about efficient water use, and at the same time strive to ensure that the Acton Water District has its own house in order and that we do indeed "practice what we preach."

Sincerely,



James L. Deming
District Manager

Acton Water District Conserves Water By:

- ? Full metering
- ? Regular system leak detection surveys
- ? Ongoing water meter replacement and repair
- ? SCADA system monitors entire system
- ? Optimizing and replacing wells

New Rates Reminder

Our new, higher, water rates are currently in effect. Under the new rates, the water you use during the summer will be billed at a higher rate than the water you use in the winter. The Acton Water District has implemented these new rate increases to help pay for capital improvement projects, and we hope the higher spring/summer rate structure will provide incentive for customers to be particularly conscientious about conserving water during the critical high demand time of the year.



Clapp Well Improvements

The Water District's Clapp well, located across Massachusetts Avenue from the District's main office, has been in operation since 1976. The Clapp well has been used intermittently because it is near a buried peat deposit and sometimes produces "tea-colored" water that is high in iron and manganese. Although the water meets all state and federal health standards and is safe to drink, many consumers find the color objectionable. In addition, the vacuum system that drew the water out of the ground at the Clapp well is not as efficient or reliable as more current pumping methods.



As part of our effort to optimize all our sources of drinking water, the Acton Water District has re-developed the Clapp well system. We located two sites within 50 feet of the existing well that are good sources of clean water. These sites were fully developed and a submersible pump system was installed. We are confident that this will reduce or eliminate the color problems at the Clapp Well and allow us to more fully utilize this important source of water.



Saving Water Indoors

Although the Acton Water District tends to focus on outdoor water conservation because of our spring/summer demand issues, it is important to keep in mind the things we can do indoors to help conserve water. The greatest uses of indoor water are generally the toilets, clothes washer, and showers, in that order. It is now relatively easy to decrease your usage in these three areas by installing low-flow fixtures or appliances. With water rates increasing and appliance costs decreasing, the payback period on these investments is becoming increasingly shorter.

Perhaps the greatest savings can be achieved by replacing any old toilets in your home with the new ultra-low flow (ULF) 1.6 gallons-per-flush models. These toilets have been required since 1989 under Massachusetts Plumbing Code for new construction. Many consumer surveys compare these new ULF toilets favorably with the old 7-gallons-per-flush models.

Clothes washers are another major user of household water. If you are looking to purchase a new clothes washer, we encourage you to consider purchasing a water-conserving horizontal-axis washing machine. These machines can save more than half of the water and energy used by conventional machines, and are now widely available for residential use. Many owners claim they clean better than the convention top-loading machines. Both EPA's Energy Star Program and the Consortium for Energy Efficiency are good sources for information and lists of conserving brands.



Horizontal axis (or front loading) washing machines can save over half of the water and energy of a conventional model. These machines are used exclusively in many European countries and are becoming increasingly popular in the U.S.



Showers are typically the third greatest use of household water, and if you have not yet installed low-flow showerheads, we encourage you to do so! You could save more than 75 percent of the water used in your shower, and these fixtures are inexpensive and easy to install. If you still have standard showerheads in your home, the Acton Water District will provide you with *free* water conserving showerheads. Please call or stop by our offices to pick up your showerheads and other information to help you conserve water indoors.

Water Conservation Open House



Jennifer and Lindsay Chen pick up their rainwater barrel at the Acton Water District.

The Acton Water District celebrated Drinking Water Week on May 6th with a Water Conservation Open House and a rain barrel event. Over 120 Acton residents visited the water district headquarters to pick up their rain barrels, which were subsidized by the Acton Water District and offered through the New England Rain Barrel Company. Each rain barrel collects 55 gallons of water from roof runoff and allows residents to make use of “free” water, even during watering bans. At the Open House, residents also learned about indoor and outdoor water conservation and entered a drawing for a brand new water and energy conserving horizontal-axis washing machine, which was on display at the Water District headquarters.



Emma Graney fills out water conservation quiz.

Robert Dionne Joins the Acton Water District

Robert Dionne has recently joined the staff of the Acton Water District. Rob will be working as a Water Operations Assistant, helping out on a variety of daily water supply operations tasks. Rob has lived in Acton his entire life, and is a recent graduate of the Acton Boxboro Regional High School, where he played lacrosse. Rob wanted to work for the Acton Water District because he enjoys working outdoors and was looking for a new challenge. “All the guys are nice to work with – it is a good job!” says Rob. We welcome him to our staff!



Robert Dionne is the Acton Water District's newest employee.

Source Water Assessment and Protection Report Available

The Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) program requires states to assess the susceptibility of public water supplies to potential contamination by chemicals and microbiological pathogens. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently completed an assessment on each of the Zone IIs for the Acton Water District's wells. A susceptibility ranking of “high” was assigned to each Zone II using the information compiled by the DEP.

The report notes the key Zone II issues of concern are: residential septic systems, transportation corridors, and the presence of DEP-classified hazardous materials contamination sites. The Acton Water District is prioritizing its future source water protection efforts to focus on these categories. Copies of the SWAP report are available at the Acton Water District, Acton Public Library, Health Office at Town Hall, and online at www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/dws.

The Acton Water District has long recognized the susceptibility of its sources, and has worked closely with the town and state to maximize the protection of all Zone II areas. Through grant funds awarded by DEP, it has compiled an assessment of high-risk land uses in each Zone II area. The Water District is fully in compliance with the DEP's Source Water Protection Regulations. For more information, please call Jane Ceraso at the Acton Water District (978) 263-9107.

Acton Water District



P.O. Box 953
Acton, MA 01720

Water Words Notice is published twice a year for all customers of the Acton Water District

Commissioners	District Manager
Leonard Phillips	James Deming
Stephen Stuntz	Editors
Ronald Parenti	Jane Ceraso
	Debra Pyrro

Design & Production
Paragon Consulting
Stephen.Lowe@paragon-c.com

Prsrt Std
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #134
Acton, MA

Conserve this Summer and Save!

The District's new conservation-based water rates are now in effect, with the **greatest increases for high use in the spring/summer billing period**. Although you won't see it until your bill arrives in October, the water you use this summer will cost you more. Taking steps to conserve water now will help you save!

