
“THE PUDDLE”

THE NORTH KINGSTOWN DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY NEWSLETTER

June 2008

Summer is here –

It's that time of year again – that time when the Water Department begins to worry about what the summer will bring – Will we have week after week of hot dry weather and water demand above what the system can deliver? Or will we have a more moderate season? And, if the weather is dry & hot, as we make the annual announcement of the odd/even water use restrictions, the customer calls will begin to escalate – “why can't we water whenever we want to? Why didn't you plan for this and dig more wells? You don't understand - there's a brown spot on my lawn so I need to water every day.”

Odd/even lawn watering was instituted in 1998 in the interest of protecting the water system from the stress of peak summer day usage and to avoid the fiscal impact of locating, permitting and installing additional wells at a cost of well over a million dollars each. But, due to the ever increasing prevalence of in-ground sprinkler systems across our community, it has failed.

Why should we care?

The North Kingstown Water system is made up of primarily residential customers. As such, average daily usage for our system is particularly sensitive to the high variability of summer weather patterns. Unfortunately, so are North Kingstown's vital rivers, streams, and other aquatic ecosystems. In North Kingstown and many other similar bedroom communities like it, it really comes down to a battle between lawns and wildlife and frankly, the lawns are winning!! In response to this unfortunate reality, a coalition of state and non-profit environmental organizations has been advocating legislative changes that would establish a 65 gallon per capita per day limit/goal on water use. Using the 65 gallons and the census occupancy data, an average household in North Kingstown should be using 197 gallons of water per day or about 72,000 gallons per year.

How much water do we use?

How much water we use during any given summer, depends to a degree upon the weather. For instance, during the hot dry summer of 2005, daily water usage was about 112 gallons per person, while the cooler wetter summer of 2006 we used, on average, 81 gallons per person; a 38% difference. But, no matter what the weather, it's plain to see that we in North Kingstown are using water at a rate above the proposed 65 gallon target amount.

What should we do?

Basically, it all comes down to this; think before you water! A well established healthy lawn does not need to be watered more often than one inch per watering, one watering per week. And if it rains, even less watering is required. To help everyone with these important actions, the Water Department will be making information available regarding local rainfall amounts, local groundwater levels, and any specific pertinent distribution system conditions on a regular basis. More information about that program will be provided as the summer progresses. **So remember – think before you water!**

Using the CodeRED Telephone Notification System to keep Water Customers Informed

The CodeRED® Emergency Telephone Calling System is a high-speed telephone communication service available for emergency notifications. The system uses Internet mapping capability for geographic targeting of calls, coupled with a telephone calling system capable of delivering customized pre-recorded emergency messages directly to homes and businesses. The system provides a tool to quickly deliver critical messages.

In the interest of keeping our water customers better informed, the Water Department has been using the CodeRED system as a means of notifying customers of water department maintenance activities that may affect them. Recently it was used to notify residents in the Slocum area about the cleaning of the Slocum water storage tank and the associated reduced water pressure.

We are aware that some of our customers did not receive a phone call so we urge you to visit www.northkingstown.org, scroll down to *Today in Public Safety* and register your contact information. Required information includes first and last name, street address (physical address, no P.O. boxes), city, state, zip code, and primary phone number, additional phone numbers optional.

Businesses should also register, as well as all individuals who have unlisted phone numbers, those who have changed their phone number or address within the last year, and those who use a cellular phone as their home phone. The CodeRED system is a geographical based notification system, which means street addresses are needed.

Is Your Yard A Sponge?

May 2008

April Showers bring...



The amount of rain that flows off an average roof, over the course of a year in Rhode Island, would fill more than 500 bathtubs!

All that **stormwater** running down the street when it rains may be as familiar as the old saying "April showers bring May flowers", but it sure isn't natural. Here are a few local facts to put things into perspective:

- ◆ North Kingstown receives about **42 inches** of rain each year. Plants and evaporation may use up to 40 percent, leaving about **25 inches**. In natural areas, much of this seeps into the ground.
- ◆ Roofs, driveways, roads and other impervious surfaces cover **15%** of North Kingstown. Rainwater falling on these impervious areas often flows directly to stormdrains and other waters instead of recharging groundwater.
- ◆ **25 inches** of rain falling on the impervious surfaces in North Kingstown's aquifers can generate more than 1.3 billion gallons of stormwater each year, an average of 3,580,000 gallons per day. This is more than the 3 million gallons pumped daily by all the town wells combined!
- ◆ Diverting only **one inch** of rainfall from the aquifer's impervious surfaces and allowing it to seep into the ground could save **52 million gallons** in one storm. This is enough water to meet indoor water needs for more than 860 families.

Divert and Collect

There are two ways to deal with all the water that runs off, beginning with your own roof: you can collect some of it using rain barrels, and you can divert some of it onto landscaped areas, rather than onto pavement.

- Roof runoff can be captured in a **rain barrel** and used later for irrigation, which not only reduces stormwater but also conserves water. In fact, a rain barrel can save 1300 gallons of water during the summer season. To order one go to <http://www.rewaterlady.com>
- If the runoff from your roof flows directly onto pavement, consider using downspout extenders to **direct the water onto a landscaped area** instead. Just keep the outflow at least 4 feet from the foundation.
- Runoff can be directed to a **rain garden**, which is a natural or dug shallow depression designed to soak up water. Rain gardens are created with highly absorbent soil and the proper mix of shrubs and plants to temporarily hold water and infiltrate it back into the ground. For more information about rain gardens, visit: <http://www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/raingarden.htm>

