



*John James Audubon said, "A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children." Today's water conservation practices are especially important to future water consumers. The lives of our children and our children's children will in part be shaped by the continued availability of safe water supplies. Furthermore, our water environment must be adequately safeguarded for future generations to enjoy and benefit from. So one can see the importance of educating our young water consumers and future environmental stewards about the importance of water conservation. This Tip Sheet provides pointers on how to talk with kids about conserving water.*



## PE Tip Sheet No. 31:

# Talking to Kids about Water Conservation

**K**ids play an important role in making sure that every drop of water counts. There are things you can do to help them save water. If everyone saves a little, we can save a lot. Kids' sense of water conservation awareness and practice starts and finishes with you, their role models. Sound like a "dry" subject? Not when you make it fun to learn.

Teaching youngsters about conserving water is most effective when the fun factor is built in. Kids can have fun learning about the basics of water conservation. They will have fun when engaged in hands-on water conservation learning activities. They will have fun when learning how to continue to enjoy all the benefits and fun water delivers while learning how not to waste a drop.

### Talking about Basics

When driving near a lake, river, or stream, take the opportunity to talk to youngsters about the water cycle. Stop and explore the plants, animals, and insects that rely on the water they live near. Have them explore whether the wild animals, birds, and fish have clean, healthy places to live. Look for impacts that we have on their environment. Have them paint a picture or write a short story about what they saw and learned.

Talk to kids about where the water they drink comes from. Help them find out where the raw source of water is located, how people use it, where rainfall flows, and what sources of pollution might affect water quality. To get the big picture, have them draw a map of your watershed.

Talk to kids about all of the uses of water. Have them write a list. When the lawn

sprinklers are on, talk to them about the dangers of taking too much water.

### Talking about Saving Water

Help kids feel empowered. Let them know what they can personally do to save water. Have them:

- ◆ Turn off the water while they're brushing their teeth.
- ◆ Take shorter showers. Make it a game. Keep an egg timer in the bathroom and see who can get their showers down to three minutes and still get clean!
- ◆ Help mom or dad fix the dripping faucet. Show them how much water is wasted by catching the drips in a container before fixing the faucet.
- ◆ Help mom or dad install a water-saving showerhead. In addition to the water it saves, it also saves the fuel that would have been used to heat up the extra hot water. And that reduces pollution.
- ◆ Have them fill a gallon plastic bottle with water and place it in the toilet tanks, which could keep 5,000 gallons of water a year from going down the drain.
- ◆ Rinse vegetables in a full sink or pan of water.
- ◆ Have them fully load the dishwasher.
- ◆ Rinse dishes in a full sink or pan of water.

### Actions Are Louder than Words

What do you teach them about saving water outdoors? Obviously adults are key here, but let kids know what your family is doing to reduce water use, such as:

- ◆ Not over-watering landscaping – watering your lawn or garden early in the morning or late in evening and complying with

landscape watering restrictions.

- ◆ Not watering on cool, rainy, or windy days.
- ◆ Adjusting sprinklers so that they don't water the sidewalk or street.
- ◆ Equipping all hoses with shut-off nozzles.
- ◆ Using drip irrigation systems.
- ◆ Planting drought-tolerant or low water-use plants and grasses. Take them to the garden center and explore the selection of low water-use plants and flowers.
- ◆ Using shrubs, ground cover and indigenous plant species to reduce the amount of grass in the yard.
- ◆ Placing mulch around plants to reduce evaporation and discourage weeds.
- ◆ Setting your mower blades one notch higher, since longer grass means less evaporation.
- ◆ Applying a pool cover to cut down on water evaporation.
- ◆ Utilizing a bucket instead of a hose to wash your car.
- ◆ Grabbing a broom rather than a hose to clean sidewalks and driveways.

### Remember To Make It Fun

Here are other fun ways to engage youngsters in learning about water conservation.

Have them keep a record of all the activities you and your family do each day that use water. Have them write down ways these activities can be changed to conserve water.

Have your kids track your family's water use by reading your water meter. Have them locate it and write the reading down on a daily basis for a week or more. After several days of readings have been obtained, have them subtract the readings between days to determine the daily usage. Have them track

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these values for several days or weeks. Note that typically water meters record the amount of water used in gallons or in cubic feet of water. If the meter records in cubic feet, multiply the cubic feet of water by 7.5 to convert the amount of water into gallons.

Have them make a graph showing your family's water usage. Was the use the same each day, or did the usage vary? Discuss with your kids the amount of water used each day, the factors that might affect how much water is used, and ways your family can use water more wisely.

Have your kids challenge their friends to also record water usage and then compare your family's water usage with that used in the friend's house. Have them see if they can figure out why one family's usage is different from another's and how they can save water.

### Enough Talking, Let's Do It

Why recreate the wheel? Have your kids use an Internet search engine to discover fun activities and games that will enrich their water-wise ways. In researching this article, the author got over 2.5 million hits when searching for "water conservation and kids." Give them a water conservation "word or phrase for the day" they can search the Internet for. That should keep them busy and engaged.

You can find many activities and games on the Internet that teach children about water conservation. The EPA Web site is a great source of information and activities for kids ([epa.gov/water/kids.html](http://epa.gov/water/kids.html)).

What do kids thrive on these days? Video games! They can go to <http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/game/> or <http://www2.seattle.gov/util/waterbusters/> for fun, interactive games on the computer that teach water conservation. The list goes on and on.

### Maintaining Children's Awareness

More than two centuries ago, Thomas Fuller said, "We never know the worth of water till the well is dry." It's this awareness that can make the difference between a glass that is full and one that is half empty when it comes to conserving water. You and your kids can make the difference, so remind them often about the importance of saving every drop of water they can.

*John Giachino is a principal with Boyle Engineering Corporation and serves as regional director, client services for the firm. He is based in Orlando. You can download a reprint of this and other PE Tip Sheets from the FWEA Web site at <http://fwea.cnsusa.com/cms/index.cfm?primarykeylist=,234,248,266,1669,1675>. ◊*

# Tom King is new FWPCOA President

**T**om King of Merritt Island will serve as the president of the Florida Water & Wastewater Pollution Control Operators Association for 2008.

Tom and his wife, Ruth, a dialysis nurse, have four children: Brian and Will, who reside in Florida; Tony, who lives in Atlanta; and Marcy, who lives in Covington, Kentucky. Tom has five grandchildren and dog that died and was stuffed. The dog was named Trigger (because he loved Roy Rogers). The dog loved Roy; Tom is half Cherokee and can't find it in his heart to love a cowboy.

Tom served four years in the Army, where he learned very little about shine-ola but became quite astute at "the other." After he left the Army, it was natural for him to enter the wastewater industry. He started out in trickling filter plants in 1972, chasing flies away from the filter beds. He earned his first license in 1973 from the state of Georgia.

Tom moved to Florida in 1975 in search of his special purpose. He found he had hidden talents understanding the mating habits of amoeba and stalk ciliates. This was the foundation that catapulted his career in management.

He worked in construction and operation of treatment systems in Tampa. He also worked as chief operator at several facilities around the state before settling in as superintendent of wastewater operations and maintenance at Seacoast Utilities in Palm Beach Gardens. Seacoast taught him to love those you work with and they will make you look really good.

There was still something missing from his life. He missed the discipline and teamwork of the military. One day he spotted the FWPCOA logo and it changed his life. The idea of a drop of water shaking hands with a sewer pipe gave him hope for all mankind and inspired him to join. He wasn't bothered by the gloves Willing Water was wearing—after all, there really should be a backflow preventer between them.

Tom moved to Brevard County and became superintendent of utilities in 1984. He learned a lot at the county—mostly that utilities and politicians do not mix well. He is now employed as supervisor of utilities for Kennedy Space Center.



Tom has been with KSC for 16 years and is in charge of wastewater, water, and plumbing. "I really love the Space center challenges. 'If it's wet and broke, it's mine' has become our motto. We used to go by 'can't s&t, can't fly,' but the humor was not appreciated by some of the NASA folks."

Tom has been active in Region 3, serving as director and supporting monthly CEU training and short schools. He was sentenced to the Executive Board in 2005.

He believes in having fun with whatever he does, which has led to some interesting board meetings. His attempt to fix some of the problems in the association by using the "correct by exposure" method was seen in the (Observations from the corner chair) quarterly bulletin.

"I am humbled by being elected to the position of president of this association. It is my belief that we are still in the growth and development stages when it comes to training. I commend Brad Macek for his vigilance over the past year working with Rim, Shondra, and Shirley Reeves to develop and implement the new training programs. I know many others in the association have contributed time and effort into these programs, and we thank you all. Keep an eye on the FWPCOA training opportunities during the upcoming year. There's more to come."