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SANTA FE + NEW MEXICAN



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Remaining

Water Conservation: A Practical Guide

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FOR VISITORS

SAVE WATER WITH THESE TIPS

While on vacation, visitors should focus on areas where they can have the greatest effect

Posted: Monday, May 5, 2014 6:45 pm

By Nate Downey

Before consuming this elixir of water wisdom, stop. Breathe. Drink some

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and get the most out of their precious time in the City Different:

- “Navy showers” (a brief wet-down, followed by soap-down with the water off, followed by a brief rinse) not only save water, but such a short shower also gives you more time to get out and enjoy all the things New Mexico has to offer.

- Shut off the faucet while you shave or brush your teeth. This is also standard Santa Fe procedure. What’s nice is that without all of that noisy and wasteful running water, visitors will experience a heightened sense of tranquility while doing the most mundane things — and that’s very Santa Fe!

- In addition to vigilantly reusing your sheets and towels, the most important act a tourist can take is to report water leaks and waste.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one drip per second can waste 3,000 gallons per year. But waste issues can’t be fixed unless people like you raise our consciousness about them. Please call 955-4222 to report any perceived problem.

- One citywide regulation that all restaurant-goers will run into is that drinking water is provided to patrons of eating establishments only upon request. This is mostly a symbolic gesture designed to start a discussion about the importance of water conservation. It’s not about saving lots of water, so make sure you request water for everyone — or at least for your designated driver. Remember, you’re at altitude in a dry climate. Always stay hydrated!

- The full Santa Fe experience requires at least a little hiking. If you go — and we hope you do —

water. It’s hard to absorb important information if you’re dehydrated.

Water is a serious challenge across the fruited plain. The Land of Enchantment happens to be in the center of a drought ranging from Texas to California, but from Florida and Georgia to West Virginia and pockets of Massachusetts, water problems exist in normally wet regions too. In most of these places, water conservation is brand new. It’s not in New Mexico. Here, saving water goes back for centuries, if not millennia.

We respect water. We revere it. We love it so much. We wish we could squeeze it and bathe it in kisses.

“We live in an environmentally conscious community that’s beyond conservation,” says the City of Santa Fe’s water conservation manager, Laurie Trevizo. “Our respect for water is an essential part of our identity. It’s not something we go and do. It’s how we live.”

She’s right. Ours is the community that pioneered the low-flow toilet rebate. Now, communities everywhere are

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please stay on the trails. Topsoil is extremely limited in this brittle, arid environment, and the less we stomp all over our fragile watersheds, the more absorbent our soils will be and the less erosion we will cause. This translates into healthier arroyos, streams and rivers.

FOR RESIDENTS

Water Saving Tips

People who live here should do all of the above and then take it up a notch.

- When landscaping, consider a native lawn. Kentucky bluegrass is a no-no. It's even better to install plastic grass that requires no watering, weeding, fertilizing or mowing. The best approach to landscaping is to avoid all forms of turf and to harvest storm water runoff from your roof and driveway. By using passive water-harvesting techniques like on-contour swales, wicks, French drains and rain gardens, you can divert this resource to the root systems of drought-tolerant trees, shrubs and perennials.

- You can also follow the steps in my free book from the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer, *Roof-Reliant Landscaping*. It's a peer-reviewed, step-by-step guide for designing and installing cistern systems for drought-tolerant landscapes that can be independent of any water source other than the sky. Go to www.ose.state.nm.us/.

- Know that rebates exist for cisterns, high-efficiency clothes washers and high-efficiency

following our lead.

“At 107 gallons per resident per day, we are a shining example of water conservation,” says a beaming Trevizo, a Houston native. “Salt Lake City uses twice that amount.” According to Trevizo, 59 of those 107 gallons per day go to indoor and outdoor residential use in Santa Fe. The remainder goes to public parks, government buildings, business and industry. This means that this low water-use figure also includes all of the water that people from out of town consume while they're here.

Whether you're a native, transplant or a visitor, an excellent place to find water-conservation tips is at the city's new website, www.savewatersantafe.com. There, you'll find over 50 ways to save. Although they often overlap, these tips are divided into categories including indoors, outdoors, at home and at work.

Nate Downey is the author of Harvest the Rain (2010) and Roof-Reliant Landscaping (2008). Since 1998, he has written a monthly column called "Permaculture in Practice" for The New Mexican. He is the president of two landscape-design firms: Santa Fe

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toilets. These porcelain goddesses are not merely “low flow,” like the 1.6-gallon flushers that came in during the first wave of toilet rebates. The new ones use 1.28 gallons per flush or less.

- Reusing your gray water (wastewater from bathroom sinks, showers and laundry) in your landscape does not require a permit as long as you harvest the resources according to New Mexico Environment Department guidelines, found at

www.nmenv.state.nm.us/.

- If you’ve got a leak and you don’t know how to fix it, call the city at 955-4225. They’d be happy to help.

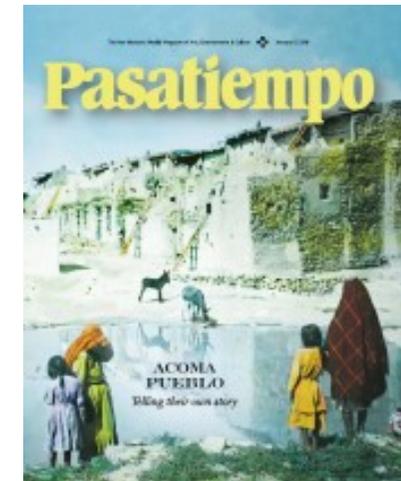
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