

## **Saving Water**

Many thanks, and welcome back, to you who have been reading this column. By now you know that quality of life, leadership and economic development are very important to me and a growing number of Bibb Countians. If you're reading for the first time and have ideas to improve Bibb County, please contact your city officials or county commissioner, or call our office at 205-926-3117. There are things each and every one of us can do to help, like shopping at home, picking up trash, and volunteering to deliver programs to our youth.

And, we need participants in Leadership Bibb 2008. The registration deadline is December 3, and the \$200 registration fee promises to be a great value. Sessions begin in January, and guest speakers will offer fresh insight into how we can connect with each other to utilize planning and organization, economic development, education, health care, tourism and other community assets to move Bibb County forward. Contact our office or the Bibb County Chamber of Commerce at 205-926-5222 for registration forms and more information.

Realizing I cannot write about economic and community development every week, I want to turn to a very serious topic we are all gravely concerned about---saving water. The 2-3 inches we had a few weeks ago did very little to alleviate our drought, and climatologists are saying this winter will be warm and dry because of a La Nina current in the Pacific. There is not much we can do about the drought, but there are some things each of us can do to conserve water. If each person in Alabama saved one gallon of water per day, it would save 4 million gallons per day statewide! So how can we save one gallon per day?

First, verify that your home is leak-free by reading your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. The reading should not have changed. If it has, you have a leak that should be fixed right away.

Second, put some food coloring in your toilet bowl. If, without flushing, the color appears in your bowl within 30 minutes, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately. Such small leaks can use more than 600 gallons per month!

Third, most of our water use is in the bathroom. Take a short shower instead of a bath. A shower uses less water. Also consider installing a low-flow shower head. They are inexpensive, easy to install and can save 300-500 gallons a week. Discourage teenagers from taking "one-hour" showers and don't brush your teeth or shave with the water running. And don't use your toilet as a trash can. Dispose of tissues, insects, and other such waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

Finally, sweep driveways and patios instead of hosing them off. Hosing a sidewalk or driveway uses about 50 gallons of water every five minutes. And as much as 150 gallons can be saved when washing a vehicle by turning off the hose between rinses.

Once you get started, you will think of other ways to save water that are virtually pain free. Driving past the dried-up ponds, streams and record-low Cahaba River in Bibb County reminds us that water is precious, and we should be taking steps to conserve as much of it as possible.

Matthew Hartzell, County Extension Coordinator  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
Bibb County Extension Office  
Phone: 205-926-3117 Fax: 205-926-5114