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Eighty percent of the Earth is covered by water. Amazingly, only 1% of that can be used for drinking water, irrigation, and household use. With the drought we experienced recently, many people began to realize the need to conserve water. Even when drought conditions are not present, we should try to conserve this precious resource.

The amount of water we have on our planet today is the same amount that has always been here. Water flows through the water, or “hydrologic”, cycle. Baldwin County uses groundwater, water trapped in the ground and brought to the surface by wells. Mobile County relies on surface water, collected in the Converse Reservoir (Big Creek Lake), as well as groundwater. During drought conditions, the levels of both surface and groundwater are lowered.

Although we are not currently under drought conditions, we should still try to conserve water usage. After all, there is only a limited amount that we can use! The website www.h2ouse.org, developed by the California Urban Water Conservation Council, offers tips to conserve water in your home and garden, including:

- ◆ Replacing washers or valves in bathroom and kitchen faucet controllers.
- ◆ Set the automatic irrigation controller to the “rain” setting.
- ◆ Operate clothes washers with full loads only.
- ◆ Use native, drought plants in landscaping. They require less irrigation.
- ◆ Install low-flow showerheads.
- ◆ Use a spray nozzle with a cutoff handle on your hose so water doesn't flow continuously.

Conserving water in your home and garden can not only protect our water supplies, but also save you money. For more tips on conserving water, visit www.h2ouse.org or the

Alabama Cooperative Extension System at www.aces.edu, or contact your county extension agent.