

City Talk Column for June 12, 2024

Public Works Department

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Precious water

“When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.” -Benjamin Franklin

Hello (almost) Summer! If you have been in Arizona long, you know that shortly after summer begins comes the monsoon season. Although the rainfall is very welcome, it does cause some inconveniences that we have gotten used to not dealing with over the past months. The city has partnered with Arizona Water Company, which provides most Sedona residents with water, to encourage residents and property owners to help keep as much rainfall up here, on the rock and in the dirt, as possible and conserve.

Extractable groundwater has accumulated in aquifers over a very long time. However, this groundwater can be replenished at a much lower rate than it is being pumped, depending on the location and state of drought. Luckily, Arizona Water Company has stated they have not seen a decrease in the water level in their local wells over many years. This is great news. But you may ask, how can we help maintain this condition?

Aquifer recharge is a well-established practice that can be applied to stormwater projects to maximize the capture and infiltration of water underground. These projects can be done on your property and have a positive impact within each neighborhood.

“Water links us to our neighbor in a way more profound and complex than any other.” – John Thorson

Although there is a current requirement for new houses to detain, or slow the runoff, homes built prior to this requirement typically do not have any detention. We have seen a trend of property owners putting down pavers or concrete over a larger portion of their lot to possibly minimize the mud or gravel runoff, but conversely it also sheds water quickly rather than letting it be absorbed in the ground. We are encouraging all property owners to do small detention and retention areas to slow the runoff, resulting in better capture of stormwater, which will then help with aquifer recharge.

Some examples that property owners can incorporate on their property include:

- rain barrels
- earthen wells around the base of trees or plants to provide deep watering
- rock dams to slow the runoff in concentrated areas
- the use of decomposed granite, gravel or rock instead of concrete or pavers
- the use of grasscrete, permeable pavers or porous concrete
- swales/channels that direct runoff away from structures toward basins

Please be aware some methods of stormwater detention/retention can lead to damage to structures, or unwanted infiltration, if installed improperly. If you are interested in pursuing these types of improvements but are not comfortable that it can be done properly, a stormwater professional may be consulted through a local professional engineering consultant.

“Water is the lifeblood of our bodies, our economy, our nation and our well-being” – Stephen Johnson

Arizona Water Company has a webpage, www.rippleeffectsedona.com, that is packed with conservation ideas and touches on some of the strains on our water resources. Conservation methods are grouped into two categories:

1. Increased efficiency of water-use devices through actions like replacing showerheads with high-efficiency options, choosing a high-efficiency washing machine or dishwasher, replacing 5-gallon per flush toilets with 1.28 gallon per flush toilets, and checking that your irrigation is effectively watering plants slowly and near the roots with deep water on trees typically no more than twice a month for citrus in the summer.
2. Behavioral changes to reduce water usage or minimize water waste through actions like shortening your shower by a minute or two, turning off water while you lather when washing your hands or taking a shower, not letting water run when washing dishes by hand, and one of my favorites, directing the AC condensate drain line to a container that can then be poured on plants in your landscape!

There are many new and creative ideas to help reduce runoff and increase groundwater recharge and conserve this precious resource. We hope these tips are useful as we settle into summer.

“Flow like water. Even though the largest rocks may stand in its way, water will always find a way to get through it.” – Roger Lee