inspiring your neighbours

There are two ways to inspire your friends and neighbours: through your actions and through your words.

Actions speak louder than words

Taking a simple action can be more gratifying and less contentious than trying to verbally persuade your friends or neighbours. They may not want or need more information, just a nudge. Offer help that encourages your friend or neighbour to take that first step, even if it's only asking why you're digging that hole. (Information and resources on these actions are in the kit.)

- Pick up and drop off a public health unit water test bottle for them the next time you test your own water.
- Organize a clean-up day for a park or beach in your area. (Hand out an action sheet on water protection from an environmental group. People will be in a cooperative mood. Tap into the boost in community spirit.)
- Arrange a bulk purchase of septic pumping for your neighbourhood or a bulk purchase of shoreline bushes.
- Arrange a bulk rental rate for lawn aeration in the spring for your neighbourhood.
- Offer to show your neighbour what changes you've made around your house.
- Contact a local environmental organization to help you organize a talk or a workshop on a common concern.
- Invite your neighbour to the next community tree planting, waterfront bush planting, or water-related workshop.

You are naturalizing your lawn and waterfront, conserving water and generally cleaning up your act. You are providing an example to the people around you. They may or may not have noticed. This factsheet will help you encourage others to take action.

If you want to meet your neighbours, just start digging a hole in your front lawn.

They will all come over to find out what you're doing. They may even offer to help.

Opening the discussion

We learn a great deal by listening to the people closest to us. Talking is an important first step towards creating positive change in your neighbourhood. Change may not happen after one conversation, but over time people will begin to understand the basics of water protection. They may have seen something on TV or in the newspaper and things will begin to click. You don't need to be a broken record. Just drop a line now and then and respond to their concerns. This will open the door to further discussions over the many years of your relationship.

Some tips for openers:

- begin by speaking with your closest neighbours, or those most interested in the subject
- mention that they recycle, plant trees, or engage in other eco-friendly actions to help them perceive themselves as environmentally concerned
- talk about water in general and ask broad questions
- listen carefully and refrain from commenting
- identify your neighbour's concerns and validate (sympathize with) them
- understand the motivations of your friend or neighbour: (e.g. health, money, appearance, etc.)
- provide examples of solutions that address your neighbour's concerns and motivations

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Use straightforward reasoning.

Avoid debates. They can become quite roundabout: who's putting what into the water and where? Likely, you don't have those answers. Explain your concerns using common sense and what you do know.

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Once a concern or motivation has been identified, use information that appeals to it. Here are some approaches to try.

Motivation:	Approach:
Money	Using rain water and conserving tap water uses less electricity for pumping and saves money. Basic septic maintenance is cheap insurance against spending $5,000-$20,000 to replace a system. The cost of bottled water and/or purifying equipment is prohibitive. Let's try to keep the water clean.
Health	Any number of potentially hazardous contaminants leaking into a poorly sealed or poorly positioned well may cause illness in those who drink from this and nearby wells. A healthy septic system won't contaminate a well. Pesticides have been linked to child, adult and pet cancers.
Health	It takes less time (and money) to maintain naturalized lawns and shorelines once they're established.
Appearance	The concept of what makes a beautiful lawn or yard is changing. Bill Gates, the wealthiest man in the world, has a naturalized lawn and waterfront.

Addressing Specific Needs

Your friend or neighbour may have valid reasons for not taking a given action that you feel is very important. Try to determine the real reason and address it. They may need:

Information

Be a reliable source of information.

Offer to look up telephone numbers of service providers.

Give them a factsheet or website address on their issue.

Invite them to join you at public information meetings.

Research technological solutions to a difficult problem.

Find a qualified person or organization that can explain the process.

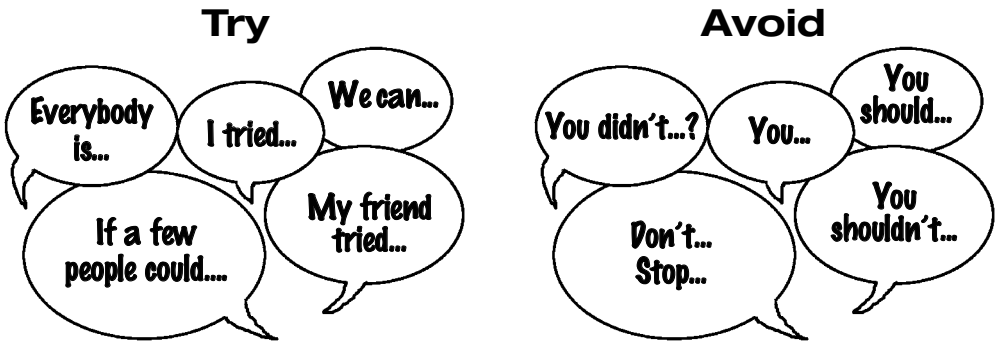
Money

Research the real costs and find out if there are programs that offer financial assistance.

Time

Recommend a service provider to do the work for them. (Lawn maintenance, landscaping, etc.)

Offer to organize a work bee to assist with a given project.



Focus on common interests and concerns.

Discover which interests and concerns you share with your friends and neighbours. Perhaps you are both concerned about your wells drying up, or about contamination from a common neighbour's septic system, or about the lack of spawning areas on your part of the lake. Focus your conversations on these common interests.

Separate the person from the problem.

Open the conversation by congratulating your friend or neighbour on a good action he or she has taken. All water concerns are common issues because we share the same water. Some people may become angry and defensive if you suggest that what they do on their own property affects others' properties and our rivers, lakes and groundwater.

No one likes to be told what to do.

Often, his or her practices were the right thing to do at some point in the past. If you get angry at a person or a group, you may alienate them and create more resistance.

Prepared with assistance from Jay Kassirer of Cullbridge Marketing and Communications, www.cullbridge.com, and Doug McKenzie-Mohr. Based on *How to Talk to Others*, originally developed by the Toronto Environmental Alliance, www.torontoenvironment.org.

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conserving water in your home

Conserving water in the rural home will:

- **improve septic system function**
- **conserve energy use** (pumping, softening, treating, heating water)
- **protect water resources for the future.**

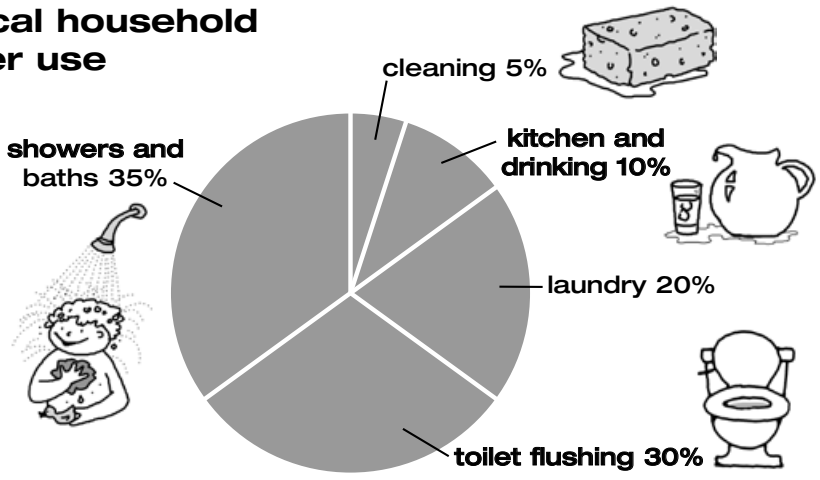
Protect your septic system from too much water

Too much water flowing into the septic system doesn't allow solids to settle in the tank. Excess water flowing into the leaching bed doesn't allow it to rest and absorb oxygen, which is necessary in the break down of bacteria and pathogens. As a consequence, pollutants can be carried into ground and surface waters. One study found that too much water flow saturating the leaching bed caused 75 per cent of bed failures.

Avoid excess water in your tank and leaching bed

- Spread out showering, bathing and clothes washing.
- Reduce water use for a few days before a large number of guests are expected. If you are planning a party, consider renting a portable toilet as your septic was not designed to manage the water flow of that many people.
- Direct downspouts and the effluent from air conditioners and dehumidifiers away from the septic tank and bed.
- Grade land so rain water flows away from the bed.
- Direct water softener brine into a Class 2 leaching pit or the sump hole in your basement.

Typical household water use



Source: Environment Canada

"Because our water use almost always leads to some degree of deterioration in water quality, the less water we withdraw, the less we upset the natural balance of our ecosystem, the less we have to spend to restore the water quality to an acceptable standard for public use."

Environment Canada: ***Water Conservation – Every Drop Counts***

Did you know?

Canadians are some of the world's most wasteful water users. Each of us uses an average 326 litres of water a day. This is more than twice what Europeans use.

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here's how to **cut back** on your **water use**

Toilet

The toilet is the single biggest user of water. Each of us flushes about five times a day.

Replace a toilet that is older than 10 years with a new ultra-low-flush toilet and reduce water use by 15 - 20 per cent.

Retrofit an older toilet to use less water with a specially designed flapper valve that closes more quickly, a dual-flush device, a toilet dam or a tank insert that displaces water. (Don't use a bare brick or rock as dissolved particles can clog pipes and septics.)

Follow an old ditty: "When it's yellow, let it mellow; when it's brown, flush it down."

Repair toilet leaks promptly. Check for a leak by putting a few drops of food colouring in the tank. Without flushing, see if the food colouring moves from the tank into the bowl. If it does, you have a leak. Check for leaks around the base of the toilet and repair promptly.

Ensure that the float ball is properly adjusted so the tank water level does not exceed the height of the overflow tube. Periodically examine whether the plunge ball and flapper valve in the tank are properly "seated" and replace parts when necessary.

Consider replacing a water toilet with a composting toilet and reduce total water use by 30 per cent.

Shower

Install low-flow shower heads or adjustable flow-reducer devices, preferably with shut-off buttons, and save 25 per cent of shower water and about $100 a year in heating costs.

Short showers use less water than baths.

Turn taps off snugly so they don't drip.

Promptly repair leaks.

Sinks

Install an aerator and or a water flow-reducer attachment on your faucets.

Turn taps off snugly so they don't drip.

Promptly repair leaks in and around your taps. (One leak can waste several thousand litres of water each year, enough to fill a swimming pool or stress out your leaching bed.)

Use a partly filled sink rather than running water for shaving or washing hands.

Turn off water between wetting your toothbrush and rinsing.

Kitchen sinks

Put pipe wrap on basement hot water pipes so heated water arrives at your tap more quickly.

When hand-washing dishes, don't run water continuously.

Wash dishes in a partly filled sink and rinse in a second partly filled sink or with the spray attachment.

Wash fruits and vegetables in a partly filled sink, not under running water, and rinse quickly under the tap.

In summer, wash dishes, fruits and vegetables in a basin and put this greywater on trees and bushes.

In winter, try using used dishwater on house plants. Don't store used water.

Dishwasher

Wash only full loads in the dishwasher, use the short or water/energy conserver cycle and let dishes dry on their own. (Following these practices can mean using less water than hand washing.)

Stove

Steam vegetables in a little water or boil in just enough water to cover them, using a tight fitting lid.

Refrigerator

Keep a pitcher of chilled water in the fridge to avoid waiting for cold water to arrive at your tap.

Laundry

Wash only full loads in the washing machine.

Use suds-saver, short cycle and load size features.

Promptly repair any leaks.

Select a front-loading washer the next time you replace your machine. They generally use much less water than top-loading machines.

Spread your laundry out over the week. Consider doing one load a day or two, instead of several loads on the same day.

With information from and acknowledgement to:

Environment Canada: A Primer on Fresh Water; Water Conservation – Every Drop Counts; Water, No Time to Waste: A Consumer's Guide to Water Conservation

Ontario New Home Warranty Program: A New Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems

Ottawa-Carleton: How Well is Your Well? Homeowner's Guide to Safe Wells and Septic Systems

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water filter systems

Although water quality problems may be ameliorated by improving septic function and well construction and management on your property, some contaminants may be coming from sources that are beyond your ability to control or ameliorate. In these cases it may be necessary to filter your water and/or buy drinking water from a reliable source.

When considering a water filter system for your residence you need to determine:

- what undesirable elements are present in your water
- what type of water filter(s) will remove these elements

How to determine your water problems:

- conduct your own observations and lab tests
- consider former land-uses on your property and those near-by for clues on what to test for
- access free tests for e. coli and total coliforms at the nearest public health unit
- use the Baseline Water Well Test (see brochure) or a local laboratory to test for contaminants such as VOCs, pesticides, oils, and other fuels

for more **information** about **selecting** the correct **water filter** see: **'How Well is Your Well.'**

Type of water filter	Should remove	Should meet standard
Carbon and granular activated charcoal filters (Pitcher style, tap-mounted, or under-sink.)	Chlorine and organic matter. *Note:* If water is contaminated with bacteria, the bacteria can be trapped in the filter and multiply.	ANSI/NSF 42 for taste, odour, colour
Carbon and granular activated charcoal filters (Large scale systems.) Often used as pre-treatment for reverse osmosis and water softening systems.	Volatile organic chemicals such as benzene, trichloroethylene, carbon tetrachloride, toluene, xylene.	ANSI/NSF 53 for carbon and granular activated charcoal filters that remove contaminants that can affect human health.
Cation exchange water softeners	Calcium and magnesium "hardness"	ANSI/NSF 44 softeners using sodium or potassium chloride to remove calcium and magnesium ions from water

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Type of water filter	Should remove	Should meet standard
Reverse osmosis Often requires pretreatment by filtration or softening. Much water is wasted.	Minerals	ANSI/NSF 58. Most systems incorporate pre- and post-filters along with the membrane itself; these additional filters may be certified separately under the requirements of Standards 42 and/or 53 as applicable.
Ultraviolet light	Viruses, bacteria (incl. E. coli 0157:H7), and intestinal protozoa such as Cryptosporidium and Giardia.	ANSI/NSF 55. Class A System disinfects microbiologically contaminated water that meets all other public health standards. Not for water contaminated with raw sewage. Class B System is a bactericidal treatment for public drinking water for non-pathogenic or nuisance organisms only.
Distillation Heats water to boiling, collects water vapour and condenses vapour to water leaving behind minerals and heavy metals.	Bacteria, viruses, intenstinal protozoa, minerals, heavy metals. *Note: Contaminants that convert readily into gases, such as volatile organic chemicals, may be carried over with the water vapour and remain in distilled water.*	ANSI/NSF 62.

Certification
Health Canada recommends that filters should be certified. Filters that provide aesthetic (taste, odour, colour) improvements only may not be certified. The following are authorized by the Standards Council of Canada to certify water filtering devices:
CSA International (ANSI standards 42 and 53 only): www.csa-international.org
NSF International (All six ANSI/NSF standards): www.nsf.org
Underwriters Laboratories (All six ANSI/NSF standards): www.ul.com

Further information
Licensed Drinking Water Testing Laboratories in Ontario,
www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.htm
Health Canada, www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/water-eau/index_e.html
NSF - National Sanitation Foundation International – Lists the products it has certified according to standards: www.nsf.org
Private site that evaluates contaminants, health effects of contaminants, particularly on children, and water filters: www.cyber-nook.com/water/index.html
U.S. Water Quality Association – Interactive, water contaminants problem solver:
www.wqa.org

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rural water stewardship
check-list

- ✓ Test well water quality three times a year after heavy rains.
- ✓ Clean debris from around well.
- ✓ Check well cap and seal are intact and water tight.
- ✓ Ensure ground is adequately graded around well to direct surface run-off away.
- ✓ Maintain low growing grass or ground cover around well.
- ✓ Keep animals and animal waste far from well.
- ✓ Seal wells that are no longer in use. (Contact a licensed well technician to do this correctly.)
- ✓ Install water conservation devices (low-flow toilets, showerheads, faucet aerators).
- ✓ Pump septic tank every 2-3 years.
- ✓ Check septic bed for signs of system failure (compacted areas, spongy spots, bad smell, excessive growth of vegetation, trees over the leaching bed) and have repairs done promptly.
- ✓ Avoid putting fats, paints, antibacterial products, etc. into septic that will lead to failure.
- ✓ Dispose of oil, gasoline, antifreeze, paints, toxins at hazardous waste centres.
- ✓ Capture rain water for lawn and garden watering.
- ✓ Naturalize lawns and gardens and use alternatives to cosmetic pesticides and fertilizers.
- ✓ Talk to your neighbours about well stewardship.

I want to make a difference!

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