

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Water Conservation Podcast

“Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water.” That’s a line we all heard time and again in childhood, a true element of the American experience. What a literal reading of this line suggests, however, is the importance of water, not only to the duo, but also to the tale as a whole. Without water, Jack and Jill would surely have no reason to climb the hill at all and, even if they did, the discovery of a dry well on top would have made for a darker tale that few children would have enjoyed.

Today, in many parts of the world, water is still as difficult to access as it was in the days of Jack and Jill. But in America, most people live in a world full of fresh, clean and safe water. Were Jack and Jill to somehow stumble upon this modern oasis, no doubt they would find its availability both alarming and wonderful. And indeed, even for us, it is both.

Accessible and clean water is such a convenience; it is difficult to imagine our taps ever truly running dry. Because most of us live miles from the source of our water, it is easy to imagine the water system as a magical network of inexhaustible reservoirs and underground streams. And yet, as much of the world knows painfully each day, water is both a precious and scarce resource. Scientists estimate that only one-percent of the global potable water supply is available to people. While this is partly because most water on earth is saltwater or ice cap, accessible water supplies are also limited by increasing levels of pollution and other human-made disruptions like watershed encroachments and urban sprawl. In the worst cases, these disruptions, combined with long periods of hot, dry summer weather can lead to droughts and increase the difficulty of acquiring safe, clean water.

With the global population soaring, we need enlightened public policy and a comprehensive conservation strategy to ensure healthy growth. The US Environmental Protection Agency’s recent launch of the WaterSense program offers just this. A similar program to the successful EnergyStar campaign, which promotes energy conservation, WaterSense informs consumers about the plumbing products they purchase, highlights those products that meet rigorous standards of conservation and performance, and creates a recognizable label that consumers across the nation will identify with real savings – both in water and monthly expenses.

EPA estimates that each year, a household using water efficient products could save enough water to supply 150 neighbors with water for a year. Especially in a heavily populated metropolitan area, that amounts to big savings for residents, business and government – and that dovetails perfectly with the Bush Administration’s commitment to accelerate the pace of environmental progress while maintaining economic competitiveness.

WaterSense recognizes that environmental progress can only occur when public support and private innovation are simultaneous. By teaching Americans about the benefits of water-conserving products and utilities, WaterSense provides an incentive for

innovation in American business and the chance to develop exciting new technologies. Those two things together add up to healthy change. Business, consumers, and the environment all come out winners. WaterSense marks an important advancement in good environmental behavior, so make sure to look for approved products as they start appearing on shelves this fall.