

Reader Comment: Less is more when it comes to TF water

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Idaho water – there’s never enough and usually too little. Twin Falls City is blessed with multiple sources – the underground north-side aquifer, south-side wells and Snake River canal water. A review of our nearly 50,000-resident community’s usage demonstrates why we are *the* leader in water resource conservation.

Twin Falls Canal Co. is the world’s most successful private/public land reclamation project, responsible for southern Idaho’s “magic”

agricultural bounty and initiating 20th century's migration of hard-working families to newborn farms and towns. Twin Falls mainly utilizes the aquifer and some wells to satisfy domestic thirst today, but we own about 4,700 shares of canal water – some are leased, other shares water public parks.

The city, at peak load, once used 33.5 million gallons a day of pristine underground aquifer water, pulled 500 feet up the canyon, chlorine-treated and pumped to homes, yards and gardens. Consumption totaled 911 gallons per capita. But in 2003 we got smart and began building pressure-irrigation systems, using untreated canal water for eligible lawns and gardens. So numerous homes developed a potable system for inside usage and a non-drinkable PI system for outside

The gravity-flow resource has a mission: saving the aquifer and reducing public power bills pumping water to municipal homes. By 2016, new pressure-irrigation systems had reduced peak summer demand from 33.5 mgd to 25 mgd, a 25 percent reduction, dropping consumption to 550 gallons per capita (39 percent less)! Over three years, Idaho Power rebated Twin Falls \$102,000 for reduced power consumption, due to high-efficiency pumps at the new tertiary waste water plant and reduced aquifer pumping.

If we can reduce treated water consumption by 25 percent, even as our our population grew by 10,000 while providing a million gallons of day pristine water to new industries, there must be more ways to conserve our invaluable resource.

The city should stop watering small triangular grass parks where the original town site meets Blue Lakes Blvd, and switch to zero-scaping. Look

at newly landscaped businesses on North Blue Lakes for what desert landscaping can look like. The city is beginning to write new z-scaping ordinances for public review, which will further lower consumption if implemented in new construction.

City water staff have a revelation: Many lawns in the city are over-watered, thus reducing grass-root nutrients and prompting owners to dump more liquid gold into the bleached ground. Stop watering during summer's heat and turn on the tap during early morning or evening hours. And we could let grass grow higher to preserve water.

Water conservation is smart, good insurance when living in a desert. Sometimes less can be more.