GALLONS PER DAY (GPD)

Residents on the North Fork tend to use more water than the national average. An analysis of residential users of public water in Southold[1] found that summer use was over twice the national average, at 559 GPD for single-family homes, while the median usage was much lower at 247 GPD, just above the national average of 240 GPD. Average annual daily use for Riverhead[2] is 370 GPD per residence. This surged to 757 GPD during the summer of 2019 and 956 GPD during the summer of 2020.

We must work harder to preserve our water.

The water conservation program is managed by Peconic Green Growth in cooperation with the Town of Riverhead and funded by the Long Island Community Foundation.

PECONIC GREEN GROWTH

LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
A Division of The New York Community Trust

[1] Peconic Green Growth Inc.
[2] Riverhead date, 6/19-5/20, and 6/20-9/20 based on quarterly records in three cycles.

GOOD

- Run your irrigation just once or twice a week. The Riverhead Water District limits the watering of lawns to even/odd days as well as prohibits irrigation during the hours of 5–9 AM and 5–9 PM.
- Don't water unless you have to. Experts recommend watering no more than 1 inch per week (~1 hour). Long Island receives nearly 4 inches of rain per month, so you may not even need to water at all! Too much watering causes shallow, weak root systems, fungus growth and can even kill grass.
- Change your watering schedule based on the month and weather conditions.

BETTER

- Properly install a rain sensor open to the sky. Use a Water$ense SMART irrigation controller, which adjusts to the weather. Even better is the cloud-based controller that adjusts the schedule automatically to multiple inputs, including the amount of rainfall, weather report, soil moisture and temperature.
- Properly designed low volume irrigation systems are a great way to apply water to plants with less loss to evaporation.
- Zone your plantings based on their consumption of water and need for sunlight. You will avoid both wasting water and killing plants from overwatering. Grass areas will require the most water, so consider reducing the area of your lawn.

BEST

- Maximize the use of native plants, as these are usually resilient for your environment
- Only water to establish vegetation: one year for grass and plants, two years for shrubs, and three years for trees. It is okay to let grass dry out during a drought; it will revive. Remember there are more vital needs for precious freshwater, such as cultivating food, industry and domestic uses.
- Reduce impervious surfaces, so that rainwater can reach the aquifers.

Help Conserve Water on the North Fork

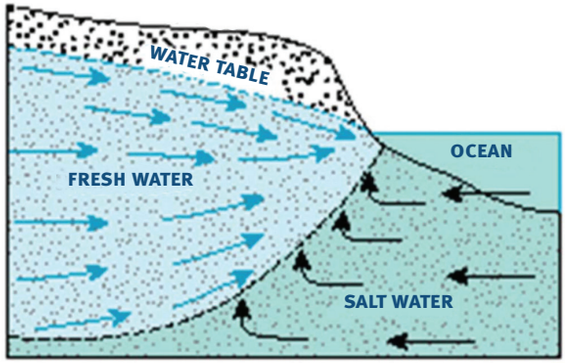
THE NEED

All of the water used on the North Fork is pumped from underground aquifers that are fed solely by our local rain and snowmelt. Aquifer levels drop significantly in the summer months, during the tourism and farming season, which are also the driest months of the year.

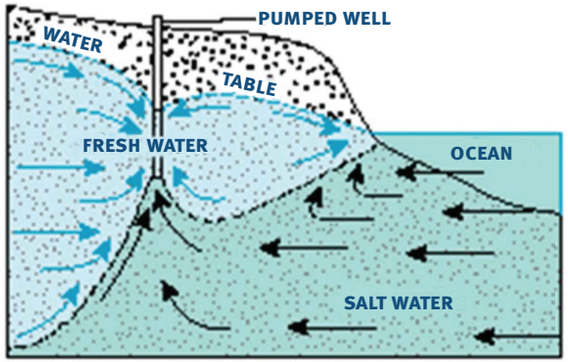
Peaking — a term that refers to periods of heavy demand on our water supply — occurs when a lot of water is drawn from many locations during the same period of the day or season, such as when lawn irrigation systems start simultaneously early on summer mornings. These peaks in demand are costly: water delivery costs rise as more holding tanks and additional wells are needed to meet temporary highs.

The North Fork is also surrounded by saltwater. When our aquifers shrink or water is pumped heavily, salt water moves into the vacuum and contaminates freshwater wells. This is happening with more frequency in our area.

NATURAL CONDITIONS



SALTWATER INTRUSION



Source: http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/gw/quality.html

INDOOR WATER CONSERVATION

You can make a difference inside your home with simple interventions that will conserve water and save you money. First, fix leaks; the average home annually leaks and wastes 9,800 gallons per year! Simply replacing toilet flappers or faucet washers reduces waste. If you replace toilets, showerheads, clothes washers and faucets with EPA Water$ense fixtures you can lower your indoor water use by at least 20% with savings that can cover the replacement costs in one year.[1] For instance, toilets use the most water inside the home. Older toilets (before 1984) can use between 3 to 5 gallons of water per flush. Current code is 1.6 gallons, but EPA Water$ense fixtures use only 0.8 to 1.23 gallons per flush. Look for their logo on packaging or go to: www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-products

Also remember to conserve water by altering everyday habits: turn off the tap when brushing your teeth (8 gallons), or while shaving (10 gallons). Use dishwashers or clothes washers for full loads only; time your shower to only 5 minutes (12.5 gallons), the average is 8 minutes (20 gallons).

[1] www.epa.gov/watersense/statistics-and-facts

OUTDOOR WATER CONSERVATION

Outdoor uses make up 50%–70% of all domestic use. Roughly half of the water used for irrigation is lost to evaporation. Irrigation system design and operation, as well as the water requirements of the plantings have a large impact on the efficiency of water use.

Water used for lawn irrigation is our biggest challenge, both in the amount of water used and the timing, as most automatic sprinklers turn on in the early hours of the morning, overwhelming the capacity of the supply system.

When using public water for irrigation, we are spending money to treat water to drinking water standards, but then pouring it onto the ground.