I recently heard an expert say that World War III is going to be over water. If we want to be a step ahead, we should all take steps now to conserve water. The process of saving water is nothing new to those who haul water. You know how to conserve water, but those of us who have a well or live on a water delivery system need to polish up our skills.

Just like dealing with money issues, take a look first at where you are spending your water budget. If you have a water delivery or if your water comes through a pipe, you know how many gallons of water you are consuming. It is a little more difficult for those of us who have water wells, but it is just as important to conserve. You don’t pay for the water, but you do pay for the electricity that pumps the water. All of us have a cost for water whether it is in the form of an electric bill, cost of water, or the time and energy it takes to haul water.

Saving water is easy for everyone to do. Become aware of where you are using your water and use some of these ideas to cut down your water consumption.

**Bathroom** — This is the biggest area of water use in the home with the toilet being the number one culprit.

- If the toilet was installed prior to 1992, it can use as much as 6 gallons to flush. If it doesn’t need replacing, reduce the amount of water used for each flush by inserting a displacement device in the tank. Keep in mind that at least 3 gallons is needed to ensure proper flushing, though there are some new ones on the market that use as little as 1.6 gallons. Upgrade older toilets with water efficient models.
- Check the toilet for leaks. Place a few drops of food coloring into the tank. Within 30 minutes, if the food coloring appears in the bowl without flushing, there is a leak that needs repair.
- If your shower fills a one-gallon bucket in less than 20 seconds, replace the showerhead with low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads. Using these low-
flow devices is the best water conservation action to take and usually the cheapest.

- Shorten your shower by a minute or two and you'll save up to 150 gallons per month. Every minute, 5 to 10 gallons of hot water is running down the drain. Take showers instead of baths. Filling the tub uses more water than a shower.

**Kitchen** — Only run the dishwasher when there’s a full load. Check dishwasher directions. Most new machines clean more thoroughly and do not recommend pre-rinsing dishes before putting in the dishwasher. Here are some more water-saving tips in the kitchen:

- When hand washing dishes, use one bowl to wash and fill the other bowl with rinse water. For a single bowl, wash and stack dishes in a drainer, then rinse with a sprayer. Soak pots and pans instead of letting the water run while you scrape them clean.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Disposers require a lot of water to run properly. In addition, if you have a septic tank, that much water just fills up the tank. Compost vegetable food waste instead and save gallons every time.
- Use a bowl or pan filled with water to wash and rinse fruits and vegetables. Collect the water you use for rinsing fruits and vegetables, then reuse it to water houseplants.
- Don't use running water to thaw food. Defrost food in the refrigerator for water efficiency and food safety.
- Keep a pitcher or beverage dispenser of water in the refrigerator. This will eliminate running the faucet to get a cold glass of water.

**Laundry** — Washing clothes is the second largest use of water in the home.

- Wash only full loads of clothes or adjust the water level to the amount of clothes.
- Use the correct amount of detergent to eliminate second rinses.
- Washing dark clothes in cold water saves both on water and energy, while helping your clothes to keep their colors.
- When buying new appliances, consider those that offer cycle and load size adjustments. They're more water and energy efficient. Compare resource savings among Energy Star models. Some of these can save up to 20 gallons per load, and energy too.

Water costs money and could one day be in short supply. Take steps now to conserve.

**Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at rrdinstel@alaska.edu or by calling 907-474-2426. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.**