

# The Daily Courier

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## **Talk of the Town: Learn to conserve now, before it's too late**

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Special to the Courier

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You can taste it, smell it, hear it, see it and touch it. You can freeze it, you can thaw it and it is still the same. You can't live without it. Even Benjamin Franklin said, "When the well is dry, we learn the worth of water."

Remember the little ditty you used to sing when you were young, "Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink"? We have an illusion of water abundance, but it is fading with each passing year. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to do something about it.

It does not take an engineer or a scientist to tell us what we have to do.

Just stop and think about how much water each of us uses every day and then think, "Where does this water come from? What can I do to reduce what I currently use?"

Conservation of water is the cheapest, most ecologically sound way to address many of our water concerns. We need to change our community "water ethic" and use less, recycle what we use and help our scant rainfall make its way back to the aquifer. Water conservation is a practical and responsible way everyone can contribute towards a more sustainable water supply.

A wonderful way to reduce water usage is to install water catchment systems.

Rainwater can be used to water your personal landscaping, flower garden and even your vegetable garden. The city of Prescott could begin now to create water catchment systems on the buildings in the downtown areas. We need to be more creative with our ideas about water.

We do have some time now to move Prescott to the forefront of water conservation; we could become the most creative city out there and lead the way for the rest of the state, the Southwest and the U.S. We need to gather our most knowledgeable people, our most creative minds - the people who can think outside of the box, who are willing to say, "Let's try something different."

Often we are overwhelmed by problems we think we do not know how to solve, so we ignore the situation hoping that someone else will tell us what to do.

We think environmental problems are complex, or that we do not have the knowledge, but that should not keep us from being informed and active citizens. Each of us can start out on a small scale on our own homes, then our neighborhoods and public buildings.

I reside in the Manzanita Village Cohousing Community, a 12-acre property located in Prescott. We have been an active environmental neighborhood for almost 20 years. Over the past several years the village has applied for and received several grants from the Arizona State Forestry Division. The grants required the village to provide matching funds and physical labor to create an urban forest in the middle of the village.

We also used these grants to construct a rainwater catchment system using the roof of our Common House. That has worked so well that we are building an even larger water catchment holding 15,000 gallons. All of this water is, and will continue to be, used in our gardens, which provide vegetables all year long, and on our landscaped area and fruit trees.

Recently we were awarded a grant through [Prescott College](#) and the Environmental Protection Agency to increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues and to develop skills necessary to make informed environmental decisions.

As part of the grant, we will be facilitating a course through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at [Yavapai College](#) entitled, "Protecting Arizona Waters - A Personal Plan." This course will combine classroom instruction with field trips. In the classroom, local experts and politicians will discuss the status of Prescott area water resources and the history of water, as well as water conservation efforts. Field trips will give class participants opportunities to visit local sites engaged in water conservation, water catchment and wise water usage, as well as the chance to participate in a hands-on installation of water catchment devices.

During the course, students will learn to use an environmental problem-solving model to evaluate local water issues. They will have an opportunity to evaluate their personal impact on water usage and to plan their own water stewardship efforts.

This course consists of six two-hour sessions, beginning April 1. Registration begins the first week of March. Email [twoputschoegl@aol.com](mailto:twoputschoegl@aol.com).

Learn more about the Citizens Water Advocacy Group at [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org).

Donna Putschoegl is a member of the Citizens Water Advocacy Group.

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