Meeting the Growing Demand for Water through Conservation Education

- Population growth, drought and increasing water demands have added stress on the state’s water supply.
- Water demand in Texas is projected to increase by 22 percent between the years 2010 and 2060.
- The 2012 State Water Plan includes more than 500 water-management strategies necessary to balance the projected water supply and demand.
- Municipal water conservation is expected to account for approximately 7 percent of new water supplies by 2060, part of which would be achieved through education.

Extension’s Response

- In 2011, Extension became involved in the 40 Gallon Challenge – a program that calls residents and businesses to reduce the region’s average water use by 40 gallons per household each day. The challenge initially began as a volunteer campaign to increase water conservation.
- The program educates and encourages people to adopt new water-saving techniques and practices, such as repairing leaky faucets; turning water off between rinsing dishes or while brushing your teeth; replacing old, non-efficient toilets and showerheads with low-flow devices; and reducing irrigation runtimes.
- The 40 Gallon Challenge now boasts more than 4,600 participants in 42 states who have either adopted or plan to adopt water-conservation strategies amounting to a daily water savings of over 870,000 gallons nationwide.
- Through the 40 Gallon Challenge program, AgriLife Extension has also provided residential water education to more than 1,050 people attending 80 programs in 89 Texas counties.

Economic Benefit

- The economic benefit of the 40 Gallon Challenge program is measured in terms of water savings and water cost savings associated with new, efficient water-saving practices.
- Texas participants have indicated their intentions to adopt practices that would save an estimated 70.7 million gallons of water annually—and more counties are implementing the program each week. Using an average municipal water price, the water cost savings to participants is estimated at $299,000 a year.
- In addition to these water costs savings, the ultimate societal benefit to Texas is a more efficient use of scarce water resources.

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