

Gillette water use leveling off

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After three summers of consistent drops in water usage, Gillette's consumption rate is starting to level out.

That trend is bound to happen as the city grows, Diane Monahan said, the city's water services manager.

"Our water (usage) is stabling out and that's despite that we keep adding water services every year," she said.

More than 800 new water server accounts were added in 2008, and the usage still went down.

This year, 405 homes or businesses were added to the Gillette's water accounts.

Gillette used 9 percent less water in summer 2008 compared to summer 2007. This year is about the same.

"We are doing very well," Monahan said. "This year is very similar to last summer. We're stabilizing."

In 2008, people used a total of 22.7 million gallons of water from June to August. In 2009, Gillette used 22.8 million gallons in the summer.

The usage numbers couldn't keep dropping forever.

"We are becoming as efficient as we can because of growth," Monahan said. "We still aren't seeing the numbers like back in '05 before we went on water conservation."

It's rare to drive around the city and see people watering their lawns in the heat of the day, she said.

The city used about 8 million gallons of water in August compared to about 9.5 million gallons last August.

The peak day in 2009 was Sept. 4, which had a high of 90 degrees.

City parks, Cam-plex, the Campbell County School District, Mount Pisgah Cemetery, Campbell County parks, and Bell Nob golf course are the largest single irrigators. That will change some next year. Bell Nob won't be using city water anymore since it has switched over to using its own wells.

Those major irrigators used 13 percent of the water.

About 87 percent of the water used came from homes and businesses. Of that, 37 percent came from businesses with services that includes restaurant dishwashers and hotel washing machines, Monahan said. It is that category Gillette officials hope to target next with the water conservation program, she said.

That's where the city's new sustainability coordinator, Michael Foote, comes in. He will be directing the water conservation program in the future. Foote also will come up with ways to conserve water and to teach those businesses how to do so.

Usage

Here's a breakdown of city water in gallons used in the summer since 2006:

- JUNE

2006: 10.1 million

2007: 6 million

2008: 4.7 million

2009: 6.3 million

- JULY

2006: 12.1 million

2007: 10.5 million

2008: 8.4 million

2009: 8.47 million

- AUGUST

2006: 9.7 million

2007: 8.9 million

2008: 9.6 million

2009: 8.02 million

PEAK DAYS

2006: 13.9 million gallons

2007: 12.4 million gallons

2008: 11.5 million gallons

2009: 12.4 million gallons