

## In growing Aspen dramatic water conservation

ASPEN, CO — This city has a growing population, does a lot of snowmaking and has mega-mansions, yet it has managed to reduce its total and per-capita water consumption to only fractions of what they once were, a December 27 [Aspen Daily News](#) story said.

The city water system now has about 17,000 water connections compared with 7,000 in 1976. But customers now use only about 150 gallons per equivalent capacity unit (a standardized measurement of home water demand) per day, whereas usage in 1976 was at 450 gallons and at the peak in 1993, 520 gallons.

With efficiency and conservation measures, total city consumption has dropped from 1.9 billion gallons in 1993 to about half that figure last year, the story said.

In the story, Aspen officials explained the dramatic changes: At about the time water use peaked in 1993, the city began a proactive leak-repair and pipe-freeze prevention program, to correct the greatest cause of wasted water. Also at that time, the city began requiring installation of low-flush toilets (1.6 gallons per flush versus 5-7 gallons per flush).

A tiered water-rate system was implemented in 2005 to reward water misers and to penalize excessive users with rates of up to 2.8 times the base amount. The city also now advises residents about setting sprinkler timers in the summer.

In the late 1980s, a new city reservoir and treatment plant were on the drawing boards, but city Public Works Director Phil Overeynder now says in the story the big capital expense was avoided: "Efficiency is the cheapest source of new supply. We saw immediate results, but it took over 15 years by sticking with that program every year."