

## Sebring High School Students Participate in Shower Head Project

“Do you think it’s important to conserve water only in a drought?” That was one of the questions asked of Jill Scott’s 11<sup>th</sup> grade Earth/Space Science students. It was good to hear some of the students say no, that we need to conserve water all of the time. On May 1, 2008 Erin McCarta, Lakes Management Assistant and Corine Burgess, Natural Resources Specialist from Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District visited Sebring High School. They spoke to the students about the low-flow shower heads that they have been giving away to local residents in an effort to conserve water in our county. The students were instructed to take the old shower heads that residents exchanged for the new low-flows, and see how many gallons per minute they produced.

During the presentation, Erin and Corine instructed students how to remove the existing shower heads from their home showers and replace them with the ones handed out at the demonstration for testing purposes. Bags that were supplied by Southwest Florida Water Management, designed to measure water usage, were given to each student along with one of the exchanged shower heads. Students will take the bags and shower heads home and measure their water usage and report back to their teacher, Ms. Scott.

The experiment will show students how much more water is used by the older model of shower heads. During the demonstration some of the shower heads that we received as trade-ins used as much as 4 ½ gallons per minute. The low-flow shower heads use only about 2 gallons per minute.

Once the experiment is concluded, students will have the opportunity to take home the new low-flow shower heads and install them in their homes. These new low-flow shower heads were purchased with funds from an educational grant from the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Showering is one of the top uses of residential water in the United States, representing approximately 17 percent of indoor water use – more than 1.2 trillion gallons of water each year. By timing your shower to less than five minutes and installing low-flow shower heads, you can save up to 690 gallons of water per month. And because a large portion of water used for showering goes through your hot water heater, low-flow can save on your electric bill. That’s a lot of savings!

There are so many ways we can save water all year long. But especially now, with the drought conditions we are facing, it is critical that we do what we can to conserve this precious resource.

According to Florida Division of Emergency Management, “Florida has entered into a second year of drought conditions, as statewide average rainfall deficits during 2006-07 were the largest observed since the mid 1950s. According to the National Drought Monitor, approximately 20% of Florida is experiencing severe to extreme drought conditions as of January 1st, 2008. The drought has been most pronounced in southwest Florida and the Kissimmee River watershed. As a result, the average elevation of Lake Okeechobee has remained at or near daily record low levels since last Spring and is currently more than 4 feet below the historical average elevation

for mid-January. Streamflows are below normal across much of Florida. Moderate La Nina conditions in the equatorial Pacific are expected to intensify the drought in Florida during the winter and spring months. The recent freeze in central Florida has increased the wildfire threat since significant rainfall has been confined to the Florida panhandle counties during the past month.”

The situation sounds grim, but we can all make a difference when it comes to conserving and protecting our natural resources. It is the hope of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District that everyone, but especially today’s youth will learn to be good stewards of our natural resources. Educational and informative presentations and group participation projects such as this one encourage and teach our future voters and leaders about the importance of water conservation.

Hopefully all of the students will walk away with the inspiration to conserve not only water but all of our natural resources. By testing the old high water usage shower heads and seeing, first-hand, how much water a family can save just by the small purchase of a low-flow shower head; it is our hope that they will teach others to save water also.