

It's time to save water

Study predicts water shortage without control

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Yet another study commissioned to forecast future water use in the Chicago area predicts potentially dire shortages without better management in place.

A study released Wednesday by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning predicts that water use in the 11 counties of northeastern Illinois could increase up to 64 percent by 2050, in many instances exceeding what ground and surface water supplies can provide.

"Conservation is the key — that's what the research is telling us," agency spokesman Tom Garritano said. "The message for the general public is that it definitely is not too early to begin thinking about conserving water, and that applies equally to businesses and municipalities."

The 11-county area used 1.5 billion gallons of water a day in 2005, according to the \$1.1 million study funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and conducted by Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

That amount could fill 2,250 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Under the study's worst-case scenario, the amount would jump about 950 million gallons a day to 2.4 billion gallons a day.

McHenry County residents used 38.8 million gallons a day in 2005, adjusting for normal weather conditions, according to the study. That amount by 2050 will jump to 64.7 million gallons a day if current development trends continue but it will more than double to 100 million gallons a day under the worst-case scenario.

But the study states that with good conservation measures, the increase would be only 7 million gallons more, despite a projected 94 percent population increase to 589,000. That goal is attainable with some common-sense guidelines in mind, county Water Resource Manager Cassandra McKinney said.

"I do believe it is possible for us to continue to grow without necessarily increasing our water usage too much," McKinney said. "We just have to learn to use the water more responsibly."

See WATER, page 9A

Continued

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THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2008

50 CENTS



.....10A
.....1-8B



Groundwater task force likely will be ready next spring

• WATER

Continued from page 1A

The county's groundwater management task force, which is preparing a non-binding framework to guide conservation planning in cities and townships, likely will be ready by next spring, McKinney said.

The county likely will get a more specific picture of its water resources with a planned network of moni-

On the Net

To download the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning report, visit www.cmap.illinois.gov.

toring wells set to be drilled later this summer by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, County Administrator Peter Austin said. Unlike Chicago, DuPage County and other governments that have tapped into Lake Michigan water, McHenry

County relies exclusively on groundwater.

The CMAP study is the latest in a string that claim that McHenry County's future could be a dry one without more development and conservation measures in place.

A 2005 study commissioned by the county concluded that water demand could exceed 60 million gallons by 2030. A second study commissioned earlier by CMAP warned of demand exceeding supply in Algonquin

and Grafton townships, with the potential for the same in Burton, Dorr and Nunda townships.

The CMAP study projects that the vast majority of McHenry County's increased water usage will result from increased population rather than more commerce and industry. Although it predicts a 94 percent population increase in the county by 2050, it estimates only 9.6 percent more jobs will be created — the lowest in the study area,

which averages 56.4 percent.

The study is part of CMAP's work with the Regional Water Supply Planning Group created by Gov. Rod Blagojevich in 2006 to come up with a plan for avoiding future water shortages. The region being studied includes Cook and the collar counties, as well as Boone, DeKalb, Grundy, Kankakee and Kendall counties.

The group's final report should be ready next summer, Garritano said.