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Drinking Water Week highlights vital resource at risk

Safe, affordable water is a public health and economic necessity that requires greater investment, says the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association (MI-AWWA), which is recognizing May 6-12 as ***Drinking Water Week***, in Michigan as well as nationally.

“Part of the message our members will drive home during weeklong public events is that water itself might be free, but collecting it, treating it and delivering it costs money – as does maintaining the systems that ensure timely and efficient delivery of this important resource,” says **Bonnifer Ballard**, MI-AWWA executive director. “More than 7.2 million Michigan residents receive water service from about 1,425 community water systems with water drawn from aquifers, lakes and rivers. Protecting the source is another key message we’d like consumers to keep in mind.”

During the annual observance, water facilities across the state will host open houses, plant tours and other community events to better educate the public about the essential commodity and service they provide. Tours of water filtration and water treatment plants are planned in Muskegon, Ann Arbor and other facilities around the state.

While residents and businesses currently pay bargain prices of less than \$1 a day on average for water on demand, the cost to provide it will continue to rise as water mains, pipes and valves age and need repairs and upgrades, MI-AWWA cautions.

“Our members are proud of the work they do to provide clean, safe water to communities throughout Michigan. Funding those repairs and upgrades will be a challenge for most communities,” Ballard explains. “We’re hoping that through greater public awareness and understand about the entire

water cycle and all that goes into delivering water to customers' taps, water supplies will be able to more effectively make the case for investing in water infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.”

Current spending by local, state and federal sources fund only about one-third of the upgrade needs for all U.S. water systems. It will cost \$1 trillion over the next 25 years to restore and improve those delivery systems.

In the meantime, the U.S. loses 1.7 trillion gallons of drinking water every year to faulty, aging or leaky pipes, which on average are 47 years old. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives a grade of “D” to the nation’s drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

AWWA offers tips on protecting the sources of our drinking water, including:

- Never flushing non-degradable products, such as baby wipes or feminine hygiene products, in the toilet.
- Not pouring paint, used oil, chemical cleaners and similar household items down the drain.
- Scooping up pet waste from yards before the bacteria-laden material can run into storm drains and water supplies.
- Lessening stormwater runoff, which often contains contaminants, by using gravel, paver stones, wood or other porous materials on your property whenever possible.

Michigan Section of American Water Works Association is a vital community of nearly 1,700 water professionals in Michigan leading the advancement of water knowledge and improving the value and quality of water in our lives. AWWA is the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world’s most important resource.

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