

## Water Conservation in the Classroom

### **Situation**

As New Jersey's population continues to grow and water sources are further constrained, more must be done to safeguard a sustainable water supply. It is estimated that the average New Jersey resident uses 100 gallons of water per day (gpd), a number which in some cases reaches 185 gpd during the summer months. Even in areas where water seems abundant, water conservation is important. Efforts need to be made to change people's behavior to encourage them to conserve water. When landfill space started to become limited, the country began recycling. Recycling programs began in the elementary school classrooms where children were taught about the importance of recycling. The children then took these important lessons home and taught their parents. We need to begin similar efforts for water conservation. We need to educate the children so they can teach their parents. This is the way we change behavior and conserve water.



### **Action**

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop a Water Conservation Pilot Program for New Jersey. As part of this effort, a water conservation program is being developed to help reduce the water waste in schools and to educate children about the importance of water conservation. Some schools will be selected to receive plumbing retrofits and upgrades. While, other schools will receive water aerators and automatic shut-off devices for faucets. This program will provide teachers, staff, and students opportunities to work together to use the school, grounds, and the community as a learning tool to help teach environmental conservation practices in an effort to promote environmental sustainability. An important component of this program is the take home message. Students will have an opportunity to apply their knowledge about ethical water practices at home with their families.



Save Our  
Water..



### **Impact**

This program proposes to reduce water use by educating students about the importance of conserving our most precious resource. This program has the potential to raise water conservation awareness in a similar fashion as the successful recycling program in New Jersey. In addition, the school buildings that are being retrofitted will be monitored to determine changes in water use. The overall goal of the Water Conservation Pilot Program is to reduce water use by 10% in five pilot communities: Belmar Borough, Monmouth

County; East Greenwich, Gloucester County; Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County; Livingston, Essex County; and Rahway City, Union County. The lessons learned from the pilot program will be disseminated throughout New Jersey by Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the NJDEP so other communities can follow these examples.