



## *Water is Precious*

### **Life Skills:**

Decision Making

### **What to Do:**

Youths will become aware of the importance of water and the amount used or consumed in daily life.

### **Measuring Success:**

Youths will experiment using a limited amount of water and compare the experience to their normal water usage.

### **Audience:**

4th - 8th grades

### **Time Involved:**

30-minute introductory lesson, homework, 30-minute follow-up lesson

### **Group Size:**

5 - 30

### **Preparation and Materials**

- Four small jars filled with the following water samples:
  - 1) Clean tap water; 2) half clean tap water, half rubbing alcohol; 3) muddy water; and 4) water filled with sand or gravel
- 1.5 gallons of water in a separate container
- Copies of Water Usage Worksheet (two for each young person)

### **Introduction**

Water is our most precious natural resource — and our most limited. Although water covers more than 75 percent of the earth's surface, most of it is salt water, which cannot be used to meet our basic needs without extensive and costly treatment.

Each day, a person in the United States uses about 70 gallons of water. However, millions of people living in developing countries (about 65 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America) cannot get clean, safe water. They must walk miles each day to watering holes or collect water from dirty puddles, streams or ditches.

Women and young girls carry more than 90 percent of the water needed by their families. It takes about 40 minutes to walk each mile and get the water.

## **The Activity**

What are some ways you and I use water each day? (*Discuss personal uses, recreation uses, business uses, farming uses, etc.*) It is important to have clean water. (*Show youths the four jars of water.*) Which samples would you drink? (*Give them a chance to smell the samples.*) Sometimes, even water that appears clear can contain hidden chemicals or bacteria.

## **Reflect/Discuss**

### *Share What You Did*

Why would you drink one of the samples and not the others? How do you know the water you drink is safe? What would you do if you couldn't depend on a safe water supply? What would you do if you had a limited amount of safe water?

## **Tell What's Important**

(*Show youths the 1.5 gallon container of water.*) In many parts of the world, this is the amount of water that is used daily. (*In pairs, ask them to discuss how they would change their lives if this were all the water they had for a day. Have each pair report to the whole group on what changes they would make in order to use only 1.5 gallons of water per day. You may want to use the Water Usage Worksheet to show how the water will be used.*)

## **Generalize to Your Life**

What is the source of the water you use in your homes? Let's trace the source. Is it a well? Is it piped water? Piped from where? How is the water tested to be sure it is safe?

(*Distribute a Water Usage Worksheet to each member.*) During the coming days, I'd like you to record the amount of water you actually use in one day. If it's not a typical day, you may want to record water usage for several days. You also can take a second sheet and record your entire family's water usage. You should estimate all uses, such as toilet flushes, showers, etc. Remember, if you have a pool, it counts toward water usage.

## **Apply What You Learned**

(*Each young person will bring a completed worksheet to the follow-up meeting and share amounts and types of water usage. Discuss usage and how it can be reduced.*)

## **More Challenges**

- Ask youths to carry the equivalent weight of 1.5 gallons of water. Have them try balancing it on their heads. Try carrying it a long distance. Ask: How would it feel to have to do this for every drop of water you use? How would you feel if you spilled some of the water?
- Visit a water treatment plant.
- Ask youths to discuss water usage with their families and find ways to conserve.
- Interview new immigrants in the community about water usage in other countries.
- Explore world water issues by using the newspaper and Internet.
- Use other 4-H curriculum for additional ideas and activities.

