WAT’s Sustainable Episode 09 Transcript

00:00:07 Jenna Phillips

WAT is up, Waterloo? Welcome to WAT’s Sustainable? the official podcast of the University of Waterloo's Sustainability Office. My name is Jenna, and I am the host of this episode. Today on episode nine of the podcast, we will be talking about: WAT is water conservation? And for some expertise in this conversation, we have Brendan Schaefer from Reep Green Solutions.

Reep Green Solutions is a local organisation that is promoting water conservation, energy efficiency and more in homes in Waterloo Region. Brendan is on the call, along with Andrea Bale, who you've heard from before, who works at the Sustainability Office. The three of us will be having an engaging conversation about why water conservation is important, what individuals can do to conserve water in their homes, the incentives for doing so, and more.

I hope you enjoy this conversation, and make sure to subscribe to the podcast if you haven't already and like and share with your friends and peers. If you have any questions or ideas for future episodes, you can email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca.

Without further ado, let's get on to this conversation with Brendan and Andrea.

00:01:17 Jenna

Today I am here with Brendan and Andrea. We've had Andrea on the podcast before, but Brendan is a new voice. Today we're going to be talking all about: WAT is water conservation? So Brendan, why don't you introduce yourself a little bit first? Who you are, your background. And then Andrea, you can reintroduce yourself for our audience.

00:01:38 Brendan Schaefer

Well yeah, thanks for having me. Yeah, I’m Brendan Schaefer. I work with an organisation called Reep Green Solutions, which is community environmental non-profit here in Waterloo Region and we do a number of different things. I've been working with Green for about, I guess, 14 or 15 years. Reep does a lot of different things: we do energy audits on homes, so there's a lot of talk about that right now with the new government grant programme that just came out. But also, we do a lot of work with water conservation and stormwater management types of things. I've been doing different things related to water for, I don't even know how many years. Probably shortly after I started working with Reep I started doing different things working with wells. We used to have a project working with rural homes that have water wells. So I was doing sort of some inspections and informative visits for homeowners about that. And then we started doing some services related to stormwater management for homes. So we go tell homeowners about how they can manage stormwater better around their home and more environmentally. And more recently we've started a partnership with the Region of Waterloo, the municipality:

we're doing water audits for water conservation in homes, and so I've been doing quite a bit of that, and that's been really exciting as well. So I have a strong background in water-related things and I've learned a lot along the way, so hopefully I will be able to share some of that with you today.

00:03:25 Andrea Bale

Awesome, thanks Brendan. And for everyone listening, I'm Andrea. I was on the podcast a couple of episodes ago with Nicole and I'm the Sustainability Engagement Coordinator in the Sustainability Office, and actually prior to coming to the University of Waterloo, I worked at Reep Green Solutions as well. So the organisation is very near and dear to my heart, and Brendan was a fantastic resource for all things water and energy and more, so really excited to have you here today, Brendan.

00:03:52 Jenna

I love how full circle it is coming back together. That's awesome. And Brendan, I'd love to know how you personally became interested in water conservation, and how that led you to work with Reep Green Solutions.

00:04:05 Brendan

Yeah, you know, I don't remember where that started for me. I sort of have been interested in that sort of thing most of my life. I grew up in Arizona where water shortages are a big deal there, so perhaps that's part of it. But you know, I remember one incident about 15 years ago before I started working with Reep where I moved into a farmhouse. I rented a farmhouse outside of town in New Dundee, and the utility bills were really high, the water bill - they made me pay a huge deposit. And it was because this house, we've had problems with high usage before, and I'm like, "well, we're not going to use much water," but my bills were really high when I first moved in. I'm like, "what the heck is going on? How come, how can we possibly?" And the farmhouse that we lived in, the farm is no longer functioning, but there were these big barns out back, which we weren't really renting. But I looked everywhere to find this water with all this water is going, and finally sort of broke into the barn back there and found that all of the pipes in the barn had frozen and were spraying water everywhere all the time.

And that was sort of an eye opener for me in terms of, you know, how big a difference that sort of thing can make, particularly in utility bills, you know. But then I started working with Reep and you know, as I mentioned, I got involved with some of these projects as they came up and learned a lot more about them and about how to help people to conserve water more.

00:05:49 Jenna

That's awesome, thank you and that's pretty crazy about the pipes.

00:05:53 Brendan

Yeah it is. And I don't know how long it's been going on. The people before us didn't know it and how long it had been going and going, and there's a lot of things like that out there so.

00:06:04 Andrea

Exactly, if you don't know better, you just kind of assume “oh well my bills are just high” so it’s really good you investigated. Oh my goodness.

00:06:09 Jenna

I love how that led you to Reep. I'm sure that's part of the sort of programming, as well, that you do where you're educating homeowners on how to identify when there's potential issues and how they can improve them to reduce their water bills as well as promote water conservation.

00:06:28 Brendan

Yeah definitely, definitely. The other thing that I learned a lot in that. Wells are another thing that we work with in educating homeowners about. A lot of people move outside of town, move out to places where they don't have municipal water and they really have no idea how to maintain their well, and that causes problems with wells getting contaminated a lot, and contaminating the aquifers and what not. So we had some issues with that as well at this at this place, and I sort of just had to research that myself and figure out how you know how those things are supposed to work. So then when we had that project open up with Reep on wells with homeowners, that was the natural progression for me, to move into that that.

00:07:18 Jenna

That's awesome, I'm sure they really appreciated your expertise in it at that point. Looking at the local context, given that we're not just in Waterloo, but we are in Canada and freshwater is quite significant to us, why do you think it's important for us in Canada to care about water conservation as well as water security? And how does our geographic context play into that?

00:07:40 Brendan

Canada has abundance of freshwater, of course, more than most countries. But the Great Lakes water levels are going down. They’re diminishing and, you know, if we don't protect water that we have and conserve it, it's going to be a problem for us. I mean, it's starting to be a problem all around the world. Different countries, many have more problems than we do, but it's still a big issue for us and particularly in Waterloo Region, we rely on groundwater for most of our drinking water and municipal water. And because we don't have any like Great Lakes next to us like in Toronto, they get a lot of their water from the lake, we are in a position where we really need to conserve because there's a finite amount of water in our aquifers. If we don't conserve and protect those aquifers, then we have to resort to very expensive options of trying to run pipelines all the way out to Lake Erie or different lakes. And if we can even do that, it's you know, those lakes are highly regulated, and as I mentioned, the water levels are sinking in the Great Lakes just from being drained and over overtaxed from municipalities in different means. So it's really important.

Water is quickly becoming the new oil in terms of scarcity. I mean, it's something that we all need to live. And if we don't protect it and conserve it, then we can't live. So it is really, really important.

00:09:29 Andrea

Yeah, water is life. I hear that all the time and I think in Canada too, because we have such an abundance of freshwater, I really feel like we have a responsibility to be stewards of the land and like you said Brendan, we can't live without water. We really do have a responsibility not only for us, but I think just for the rest of the world, to be stewards of conservation and, you know, appropriate management of our water resources.

00:10:00 Brendan

Yeah, definitely, definitely.

00:10:01 Jenna

I think it's also important to note that although we do have an abundance of freshwater in Canada, it's not evenly distributed and even within Ontario, there's people who don't have access to freshwater as much as some of us, let's say in Waterloo Region would. So yes, we should be stewards of the land by conserving our water, but we also need to be mindful of our fellow humans and other Canadians and what they have access to and what they don't. It's really unfortunate when people are taking advantage of their water and you know, just letting the taps run or watering their lawns at inappropriate times, when there's people who might not even have access to drinking water.

00:10:42 Brendan

Yeah. It's really something that that we take for granted an awful lot, and that's one of the things about you know the different aspects of when I mentioned when oftentimes people move from the cities out to rural areas, and are not familiar with using a well, they really realise quickly how important that is and how expensive it can be if you don't protect it, to have to drill a new well or to remediate the well that you have. But I think in town, particularly, we sort of take for granted that we're going to have water and sometimes we don't think about that and how much were using, but definitely water is expensive and it's actually one of the more expensive utility bills for most homes. So it's really something that also will help you to save on utility bills a lot if you can conserve water and not use so much.

00:11:42 Andrea

Brendan, that reminded me when you said that we can sometimes take it for granted in the cities. My grandparents live up in North Bay and they have a well to supply the water for their home, and I remember going up there as a kid and, you know, like showers and baths and all that, if we were staying for an extended period my grandparents were very diligent about, you know, “you get your allotted time” and like “this much water” and all that was just very regimented. I didn't really understand that because I came from the city where we never had to think about, you know, if I

wanted to take a shower and if everybody in this family wanted to take a shower in one day. So that was a real wakeup call, but not everybody lives such a fortunate life where we just don't even have to think about the water that's coming out of our taps.

00:12:29 Brendan

Yeah, that's definitely true. You know, I spent some time right after university at a development project in Mexico, sort of rural development project – it was on a ranch and there as well, they were using wells, but the water was like gold. I mean you could not just sort of run the shower. It was really a neat project that was the house was designed with a lot of really water conscious features in it, the way they had the toilet sort of flushing and the drains flushing into a pond outside in the back where that would be cleaned by natural sort of plants and bacteria and that sort of thing, it was really cool, but you really had to watch how much water you using or you just run out and you just didn't have it, and you know so we all had to be very careful. And then sometimes people would come from the from the city, nearby and I remember one time this teenage girl was visiting and was just in the shower for a long time. And everybody's like, "what are you doing? She can't do that here." It really is a matter of perspective.

00:13:36 Jenna

Yeah, definitely. I also grew up in a city near Toronto, so we were very privileged in the amount of freshwater we had. As a kid I was a kind of person who also loved to take really long showers and justice reflect on my entire life there, like that was where I just zoned out and played music for a long time. And I don't think it was until we went on vacation, I think it was in the Caribbean, we were told that we couldn't drink the tap water and you had to buy bottled water, and you had to get certain immunizations to protect yourself in case there was contamination in the water, because that was a very serious problem there. And it wasn't until that vacation that I think I sort of opened my eyes and realised just how much I took for granted water and how I was so privileged in comparison to other people. Now in university I try to minimise my water use as much as possible, and when I visit home or if I see roommates and they're using more water than they really need to be, like if they leave the tap running, I'm also like, "no, don't do that. People don't have the same access, like why? Why are you doing it?"

00:14:48 Brendan

It's interesting that you mentioned showers because that you know I do water audits at some homes a lot and oftentimes people, even if there may be very conscious of how much water using, sometimes someone will say, "oh, I'm , you know I don't use much, I'm very careful because I even take my dishwater and I use it to water my plants." Or I, you know, "try to reuse water in things," but it's important to know what the priorities are and what things are actually using more water, because your dishwasher, sure, you want to conserve as much as you can with that sort of thing, but it's miniscule in comparison to the big things like showers. And showers tend to be the biggest thing for most homes of where the water is going, and you know, there's a few things that you can do about that. One is just watch how long and

showering for obviously, and how often. If you're showering twice a day at, that's certainly going to use a huge amount of water. But even if you're just showering once a day, if your shower head is not very efficient, it can use a whole lot of wate just in the 5 or 10 minutes that you're in the shower, let alone after spending half an hour in the shower so you know showers tend to be the really big one that you want to concentrate on and you want to just watch. You have to try and keep your shower to as close to like 5 minutes as you can. You can pretty well if you're efficient you can get things done in five minutes and that uses a lot less water than 10 or 15 or half an hour, right?

But the other thing is to look at your shower head and see how efficient your shower head is. There's a little flow metre bag, when I go to do a water audits a little bag that has markings on it that you hold it over the shower head and you turn the shower on for five seconds and it tells you what the litres per minute are for your shower head and how efficient that is. Typically, you want a shower head that's between five to seven litres per minute is an efficient shower head. A lot of shower heads are maybe twice or three times that much, but we're starting to see, you know, better shower heads out there. Sometimes people think that that with a more efficient shower head or what we used to call “low flow” shower head that they're not going to get water, not going to get the soap off, et cetera, et cetera. In reality, they did some blind testing on people few years back and they found that people usually can't tell the difference between a high efficiency shower head and one that's not, but a lot of people like a lot of different shower heads, even the efficient ones. That's really key, is finding a good efficient shower head that you like. I mean oftentimes I find that the efficient shower heads are actually better, and a lot of people that I that I give these efficient shower heads really appreciate it, because if you have a shower head that's sort of just dumping the water out without any sort of regulation of the flow, it isn't necessarily a very strong spray. It's like when you have a hose and you're going to, you know, you want to spay something, you put your thumb on the end. There's less water coming out, but you can shoot it further. You can control it, and that's what good shower head does. It gives you a nice strong stream, but it uses less because it doesn't just sort of drool out of the end of the of the pipe. So that's a really big one that you want to pay attention to is your showers.

But the other big thing that you want to watch for is leaks in things like toilets, and toilets are notorious for this and unfortunately toilets in this part of the world are designed in a sort of unfortunate way that that eventually leads to leaks that you don't know are happening, and it can cause a huge amount of water waste. And so you can test for it, but you really want to test your toilets a few times a year because sometimes I go into homes and they've paying huge water bills for months or even years, and they didn't know that they had this toilet that was just constantly leaking water. What happens is the water from the tank - usually on toilet there's a tank in the back that holds the water - and when you flush, it lets that water down and flushes it through the bowl of the toilet. And if there's a slight problem with the flapper - the thing that holds the water, that opens up when you flush the toilet - if there's just a slight leak in that you might not even see it or hear it, but its a constant leak and it can just drain into that bowl and will drain out gradually as the water level rises in the

bowl. So you don’t see it, you don't know that it's happening, and it can use a whole lot of water. So what you do is to test for that, you can put some blue food colouring in the tank and leave the toilet without flushing it for about 15 to 20 minutes. If you see any of that blue colouring in the bowl, then you know you’ve got problem, that you've got a leak there and you want to do something to fix that leak.

There’s different things that it could be. Usually it's the flap of the rubber flapper. It's easy to replace, takes just a few minutes, you have to go to the hardware store and get one and just replace it. It's pretty easy. Sometimes it's just a matter of adjusting the level in the tank. Maybe it's too high and it's overflowing into the overflow, so there's a couple of easy things that you can do, and it saves you a lot of money as well as saving a lot of water. So I mean, those are the two big things that I think really make a big difference in overall water usage in most homes.

00:20:39 Andrea

That's an awesome tip. I think I'm going to leave this call and go put some food colouring in both of my toilets just to double check.

00:20:46 Jenna

Yeah, I’d never heard of that, that’s super cool. And that leads into another question I wanted to ask you actually. I would love to know some ways that individuals can promote water conservation and smart management practices from home. You’ve touched on two really great ones, so I’d love to know maybe from a general sense for homeowners, but also people like students who probably live in apartments or residences and wouldn’t have the ability to change showerheads or get repairs on toilets or things like that – they're much more limited with the types of infrastructure they can influence.

00:21:21 Brendan

Yeah, I mean, I think you'd be surprised. Actually, students can usually change their shower head because it's a really simple thing that landlords don't really pay much attention to. So it's something that you could like bringing your own hair dryer, I don't know – it's something you can because it really just screws off and you screw the new one on. It is something that you can do as it as a tenant even when you don't own the home. But yes, infrastructure things – I think the toilet issue is really important. If at least you can test it and then you can let your landlord know that this is a problem. Oftentimes the landlord then will be quick to fix it, particularly if they are the ones paying utility bill. It works different ways for tenants, sometimes you're paying directly the utility bill, but sometimes you're playing flat rate for the rent utilities, what have you. So you if you find an issue that's costing the landlord a lot of money on utility bills then they're likely to be really quick to fix that.

But I mean, those are those are a couple of things. You mentioned also showers is a big one, just in how long is showering and how often you're showering. I think we tend to think of daily showers as a necessity, but you know, in most parts of the world that's not really necessarily the case, and showering once a day is not too bad, but if you can get by with every other day, that's great because you're saving a whole

lot. We might cut your water bill in half just by doing that, so it's really good to think about how often, but also how long showering for. If you're only showering once a week when you're showering for 10 minutes, you know that's not too bad. If you're showering every day for 10 minutes, you probably want to think about shortening that down to five minutes. You know the average shower in Waterloo region right now is maybe eight minutes and we're just trying to challenge everyone to get closer to four or five minutes if you can, because that makes a really big difference. So if you just somehow time how long you are showering for to begin with, because you might not know. A lot of people don't think about that, but maybe try and time yourself to see how long you're in the shower for and then challenge yourself to reduce it as much as you can and get as close to five minutes as you can.

00:23:46 Andrea

Brendan, I have a question, a myth busting question. Is it more water efficient, generally speaking, to put your dishes into the dishwasher or to wash your dishes by hand?

00:23:59 Brendan

Oh yeah, I'm glad you got that.

00:24:00 Andrea

Some caveats, but...

00:24:02 Brendan

Yes, yes, I'm glad you brought that one up because that is that is a common question – actually it's not usually a question. Most people assume that you use more water if you're using a dishwasher because...I don't know why, but that's always been the traditional assumption. But actually it's quite the opposite. You are going to use a lot more water washing dishes in the sink by hand than you would if you put them in dishwasher. Now that's assuming that you're filling up the dishwasher. If you put two dishes in the dishwasher and run it every time, run it three times a day, that's not going to be really more efficient, but usually what you do with the dishwasher – and it's more convenient this way – you just, as you use the dishes, you drop them in the dishwasher and when it's full you run the dishwasher and that makes it more efficient because it's using that set amount of water to wash all of your dishes rather than washing two dishes with that amount of water or a small amount of dishes from one meal, but you know pretty much across the board.

They have done some studies and found that regardless of how you wash your dishes by hand, even if you're trying to be very, very water conscious, it's almost impossible to use less water than a dishwasher would use. And even if you just rinse your dishes, you are probably going to use more wate than if you put in the dishwasher because the dishwasher has a set amount of water that it uses to wash all of the dishes over and over and over again with that same water, it has a filter in it and it just keeps washing and then just rinses them at the end with the little bit of water, so it's just a much more efficient way to do if you have a dishwasher. Oftentimes I am in a home, and they say, "we don't, we don't even use the

dishwasher, we don't want to use that much water like, well, okay, and maybe one person in the house wants to use the dishwasher because it's easier and the others like “no, no, we're not going to do that, we can't use that,” so it's good to be able to tell them they don't have to feel guilty about using the dishwasher. It uses less water.

The interesting thing is it also uses less energy, you wouldn’t think that would be the case, right? But most of the energy that goes into dishwashing is in the heating of the water. It's not so much the motor that's running the dishwasher, it’s a very small amount of energy compared to using twice as much hot water or three times as much hot water, that energy that goes into heating the water is a lot more than what the little bit electricity is used for the motor in the dishwasher. So it uses less water as well as less energy, so it’s really a no-brainer.

00:26:40 Andrea

Yeah, very good point. So saving in two areas.

00:26:43 Jenna

I always tried to avoid washing dishes in the dishwasher until I realise that it is more efficient that way. Are there any other myths that you would love to bust right now that you wish more people knew about?

00:26:55 Brendan

Yeah, well, one thing – I don't know if it's a myth, but one thing that I did also want to mention is water softeners. In Waterloo Region, because we get our water from wells, from groundwater that's very deep in the ground, it tends to be very hard. You probably have noticed this if you live in Waterloo Region, that the water is very hard. So most homes have a water softener, because otherwise you get scale over your pipes and it can build up and it can be real problem. The problem is that a water softener uses water, and it also uses salt. It adds salt to our water, and salt is another environmental issue for water because we're putting a lot of salt into the water that's going down the drain and going out to our eventually out to our oceans and rivers and that sort of thing. But you know, it's almost a necessity to have a water softener, so the important thing if you do have one is to make sure that it's working properly and that it's not using too much water or too much salt. And that it’s adjusted properly. Softeners are another thing that can have a leak eventually and you might not know it and that can use a lot of water as well, so it's really important to make sure your water softener is kept up and that you have someone check it once in a while to make sure it's set properly and working properly.

The other fixture that can be a big problem is if you have a reverse osmosis water filter for your drinking water. Overall, if it's working properly, it's not something that that uses a huge amount of water because the amount of water that you drink is small compared to the water used for most of your other household uses. But the problem with reverse osmosis filters is that they have a drain on them because what they do is they have a membrane and part of the water goes through the membrane. That's the part that's purified and that you drink. But the other side of the membrane is flushed out and goes down the drain. It's sort of concentrated impurities in the

water, and so that drains whenever you use a certain amount of water, it's going to drain in certain amount of water, and that's fine, it's not a huge amount of water that's draining, but what happens with them is eventually the valve that controls that drain will have a problem and it will often times start draining constantly all the time. And you have no idea because you don't necessarily see this drain, it's just maybe going directly into your drainpipe under the sink, or somewhere. Sometimes it's in the laundry sink and you can see it. But I see this quite often: that valve is gone and there's just a constant flow of water going out that you didn't know about, and that can really be a big waste of water, as well. So it's important to keep track of that, to keep tabs on that if you have one of those, and make sure that it's not leaking.

Those are the real problem fixtures for leaks, the ones that you don't see the drain like the toilet. If it's leaking and it's going down the toilet drain or the softener, it's got a drain on it as well and you don't necessarily know that was going there. Those are really important things with water.

The other thing that's important though that that I would mention is managing stormwater. It’s really important overall for the whole system of our water supply, particularly Waterloo Region. What we're doing is we're pulling a lot of water out from under the ground, where it's been for many years. But in cities particularly, we’ve paved over the surface of the land a lot, and so there's not a lot of space for that water to get back in when the rain comes, to drain down. Where that water comes from is obviously from the rain, it comes hits the ground and it filters into the ground, and the water the ground filters it out until it gets down to those aquifers and its clean again. But if we don't let that water soak into the ground, we’re pulling all that water out. We're sort of mining water in that instance. We're not really letting it replenish. It's not sustainable in other words. So the problem is, as we get more and more paved, we need to be conscious about how we can let that water sink back into the ground as much as possible.

So around your house and yard, that's really important that you want to look at ways of allowing that water. And there's different ways you can do it. You can do it with permeable paving for your driveway. Tends to be a very expensive option though, but some less expensive things are if you have rain bills and you collect that rainwater and use it for watering and then it doesn't run off into the during the storm, it doesn't run off into the storm drains, but a really big one is rain gardens, which is a type of garden that's designed to collect and use a lot of water and let a lot of water soak into the ground. It's a type of garden where you run your downspouts from your roof to that garden and then it's collecting all that water from your roof, letting it soak down into the ground and that has two-fold benefits. As I mentioned, it lets the water soak into the ground, but the second is it keeps it from running off into the storm drain. Storm drains basically are going directly to our creeks and rivers, so if you have a lot of pollution going into those, what happens is the rain hits the street and the ground, washes everything that's on the ground into the storm drains. We’re basically washing all that stuff into the river and it causes a lot of problems with pollution and our aquatic ecosystems. So the more we can have soak in, the less there will be running off into our waterways, so that's what makes it really important to try and be conscious about getting that water to soak in rather than just sort of

running those downspouts on your driveway, letting them run off the road and into the storm drain.

00:33:17 Andrea

And the third benefit of rain gardens, Brendan, is that they are gorgeous! So we see what we bought a Blooming Box Rain Garden Kit from Reep three years ago now, yeah, we're on our third year in our garden. It has just like totally flourished in our front yard. We love it so much. We just integrated it, kind of extended our main garden and added on like you know, dug down and added on this rain garden, and I have to say it's such a conversation piece when people are walking by our house. They're kind of like, “what is that? Why is your garden so deep?” And they have a lot of questions and so it's really fun to just talk to people about that, for one.

But the plants that were selected for the rain garden from Reep also support pollinators. So on our milkweed, we will see caterpillars during the summer, and it's really fun when it's when it's raining. I have to say, we're pretty nerdy and will like turn around and look at our front window and just watch the rain garden fill up. Earlier last summer we actually had some ducks that were swimming in our are really tiny rain garden, but it was really adorable. So it’s really fun.

00:34:26 Brendan

And a rain garden is a great way to do that too, because it's one of the less expensive ways to do it if you do the work yourself, and it's a fairly simple and low-tech way of really helping out a lot and having a great looking garden, too, at the same time.

00:34:42 Andrea

We definitely did it ourselves. Unfortunately for my husband, he had to do all the digging down and we have a very clay-filled front yard, so it wasn't very fun, but it was a day's work and like then it was over and now that it’s established we pretty much never have to water it, and it takes virtually no maintenance. So yeah, it was a great investment

00:35:03 Jenna

Those are really great suggestions and I love that they are low maintenance, they are affordable, so it really demonstrates how anybody can make an impact and reduce their water consumption just through these affordable low maintenance options.

As we get towards the end of our conversation, Brendan I would love to hear from you: What is something you wish that everyone knew more about in relation to water conservation and water security? So like if you could offer our audience one final tip or one final statement, call to action, whatever it may be, that would be great.

00:35:38 Brendan

Wow, let's just put it all into one sentence, eh? That’s tough. I think one thing you do is have a water audit done in your home. And in Waterloo Region it's a free service

that's offered, so even if you're renting, you can still have this done. So yeah, I'd say having a water audit done on your home is a really good one. Also, getting involved with organisations like Council of Canadians who are fighting to protect our water sources from threats and international corporate exploitation, which is another problem that we're having, and bad government legislation that's not protecting our water. I think those are some of the overall issues that are really important, policy and protecting our water.

But also doing what you can. You have a water audit that's a really good way to see where you know what your high-water uses are, and you know you know what there we go from there.

00:36:37 Jenna

Perfect, thanks so much for that. As a final wrap up question, where can people go to learn more about what Reep is doing to promote water conservation in the Region?

00:36:47 Brendan

Yeah well the Region of Waterloo has a site and I think we've got the website address in the comments of the of the podcast here. That's a really good resource. You can also look at our website at reepgreen.ca and we have a number of resources about water conservation and how to sign up to have a water audit and that sort of thing. So those are two great places to go to find resources about water conservation.

00:37:19 Andrea

Yeah, and hopefully when COVID restrictions are lifted, hopefully people can stop by the Reep House and see some of the really cool stuff that you've got there in the demonstration house in Kitchener. I was going to mention when you were talking about the showers. I love that in the upstairs washroom you have the different shower heads, I can't remember how many there are, five or six different shower heads on display.

00:37:41 Brendan

Yeah, yeah, that's right. I forgot to mention about the Reep House. So yes, we have a House Andrea is mentioning, we have a House that we've completely renovated with the with all the different energy and water efficiency features that we could. And yeah, one of them is a display with a bunch of shower heads so you can see what different ones look like and maybe get an idea of what type that you might like. But also you can fun doing some interactive things with measuring the amount of you know how efficient each of different ones are and that sort of thing. We have some rain gardens, different things outside that you can that you can look at the Reep House as well. So yeah, hopefully the world ever opens back up in five years. Hopefully it's before that! Yeah, we welcome you to come by. During normal times, we have different presentations and events there, so check our website for that, where you'll be able to see where they are.

Well, they actually were talking about doing a virtual tour of the house pretty soon too, so that might be even before things opens up. We might be able to tag on and take a look at the virtual tour, as well.

00:38:59 Jenna

That would be awesome. Well, thank you both so much, Brendan and Andrea. This was a great conversation and I'm so excited to share it with our audience and get them to start thinking about water conservation and ways that they can make a positive impact.

00:39:13 Brendan

Yeah, well, definitely thanks for having me. It's been great.

00:39:16 Andrea

Yeah, thank you so much.

00:39:18 Jenna

That is all for our conversation with Brendan and Andrea. I hope that you enjoyed learning about WAT is water conservation and you've come away with some new facts or ideas for conserving water. I definitely want to check out the blue dye in the toilet to see how efficient our toilet is!

Remember to subscribe to the podcast, share it with your friends and family so more people can be taking positive impact in their lives. And if you have any questions or ideas for future, make sure to email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca. Also, special thanks to Bennett Gallant for making our amazing jingle music.

That’s WAT’s up, Waterloo. This is Jenna signing off, and I will see you in the next episode.