

NAMES:

PERIOD:

## RETHINKING TOILETS

**Background:** In the 1990s, the Arizona State Museum created a major new exhibit featuring the life of the Tarahumara people who live in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains in Mexico, in and around the gigantic Barranca del Cobre (Copper Canyon). The museum staff invited a number of the people from this remote area, especially those who had donated their rugs, pottery, carvings, and other artifacts, to come to Tucson to attend the opening. On arriving in Tucson, they declined to stay in the high-rise hotel where museum guests usually stayed. Instead they opted to stay with someone they knew, sleeping in the backyard so they could see familiar stars. When the uses of a bathroom were explained, the group was horrified. Since they lived in the high mountains with only a few streams, water was their most precious resource. The idea of putting human waste into a porcelain bowl of clean, pure water was unthinkable.

**Case:** People in many areas of the United States are reaching this same conclusion, that clean water should not be used for human waste, or at least that its use should be *minimized*. With a partner, use the space below and on the back to hand-write some key points and plan out a one to two page (typed) letter below for a local magazine, newspaper, or online newsblog in order to encourage your community to vote for or against an upcoming local proposition to reduce the use of clean water for toilets.

**Submit to my email when complete.** Please use standard paragraphs and address your letter to “Members of the Seattle Area.” Don’t forget to sign your names at the end. Turn in this paper to me when your letter is completed.

### **The following are requirements to be included in your letter:**

- a. A standard toilet uses 6 gallons per flush and new, low-flow toilets use 1.3 gallons per flush. Multiply that amount times 3,610,000 people times an average of three flushes per person per day times 365 days to get an estimate of the amount of water that, literally, goes down the toilet every year in the Seattle Metro area. Include these figures in your letter.
- b. At least three ways to reduce the amount of water used for toilets (think of ways to lower the volume of water that goes down the drain).
- c. Examples of ways other communities are addressing this problem and how Seattle should look into alternatives. (Think Orange County, CA and Arcata, CA)
- d. Tie in the growing worldwide problems regarding both physical and economic water constraints (think about stretching the metaphorical dollar farther).

**Use the space on this page for notes/calculations/planning and write your letter on the back (attach additional paper if needed)**

