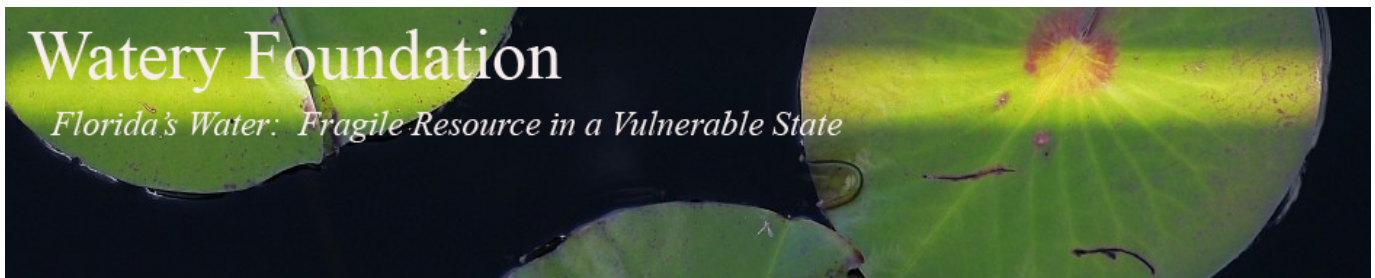


Moral Licensing; Policy Change

February 19, 2015



On February 18, 2015 at 06:33PM, Tom at [Waterbury Foundation](#) published the following article:

A water conservation campaign in Boston gave residents weekly feedback on water use. Researchers, in [comparing those water users with a control group](#), found that residents with the water conservation tips reduced their water use. Yay!!! Now the not-so-good part: this group of water conservers simultaneously increased their energy use.

Moral licensing was at work. That is when “*people can call to mind previous instances of their own socially desirable or morally laudable behaviors,*’ making them ‘*more comfortable taking actions that could be seen as socially undesirable or morally questionable.*” (p. 162). Efforts to implement direct change can be [surprisingly counterproductive](#). Other approaches can be less prone to those reversals. For example, if a state adopts more efficient plumbing standards, water use by those devices is likely to be permanently reduced. If a fee is put on every thousand gallons of water, the price signal tends also to have a durable effect.

Our individual human minds strongly resist change. It could be wiser to [focus more on changing policy and less on individual behavior](#). Like in the photo at the top of the page. The purpose of yesterday’s [Clean Water Rally](#) at the state Capitol was to

influence the policy for implementing Amendment 1. That is a great way to change policy for many years to come.

Read this article from [Watery Foundation](http://www.wateryfoundation.com/?p=11179) at <http://www.wateryfoundation.com/?p=11179>.

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