City’s conservation practices recognized

With the addition of Ehmen Park last week, Gothenburg now has three groundwater guardian green sites.

Wild Horse Golf Club and the Monsanto Water Utilization Learning Center have had the designation from the Groundwater Foundation for a couple of years.

What it means, according to foundation program coordinator Brian Reetz, is that the managers and caretakers of such sites are good stewards of groundwater by implementing, measuring and documenting their groundwater friendly practices.

Entities must apply for the designation and answer questions dealing with everything from having a water management plan to how groundwater and surface water are protected to how pesticides and insectides are handled on the site.

Protecting and preserving water is important all of the time, not just during drought years, Reetz said.

“We need to change the mindset of public thinking that there’s an endless supply of water,” he said. “And know that we can do things every day.”

City services director Shane Gruber said the city tries to be a good steward in all of their parks by fertilizing, watering and using insecticides properly to minimize groundwater contamination and runoff.

The city also uses sprinklers conservatively which Gruber said he hopes is recognized and followed by community members in their own lawn-watering practices.

“By not overwatering, we can demonstrate that it can be done in people’s yards,” he said.

For example, Gruber said some residents operate their underground sprinklers during a heavy rain.

Others don’t heed a suggested practice by the city to not water between 1-7 p.m. during summer months.

“Conserving water should be a mindset,” he said.

Educating communities about conserving water is also part of the designation.

Reetz works with city officials and a high school environmental science class about the importance of protecting and conserving water.

During Reetz’s visit to town last Friday, he talked to the class and gave members five-minute timers so they can limit showers to save water.

Across Nebraska, there are 67 businesses, parks, wildlife areas and other areas that are groundwater guardian green sites. The program is also in other states.

For more information, and a list of other designated green sites, visit the foundation website at www.groundwater.org.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636