

## facts

- ◆ Since 1950, the global use of water has more than tripled.
- ◆ Nineteen countries in the world are labeled as "water stressed." More of these countries are in Africa than in any other region.
- ◆ By 2025, it is predicted that 3.5 billion people worldwide will experience water shortages.
- ◆ In developing nations, 80% of illnesses are related to the lack of access to plentiful supplies of clean water.

# Water Basics



Pure water is essential for all life on Earth. What we do to our water, we do to ourselves.

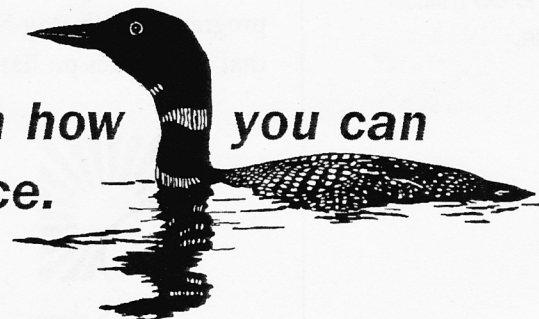
A fixed amount of water exists on and around the Earth. Although 70% of the Earth is water, most of it is not fit to drink. Only a tiny fraction of the Earth's water is fresh, clean, and accessible for human use.

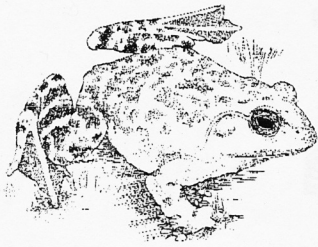
We are putting this essential resource in serious danger. The world's groundwater resources are becoming polluted and depleted. In addition, those who have access to the most water are wasting vast amounts of it.

- ◆ Groundwater levels have reached an all-time low on every continent. With water tables falling throughout the world, the availability of water will be among the most challenging resource issues of the 21st century.
- ◆ Human and industrial waste, urban runoff, agricultural fertilizers, sewage, heavy metals, and pesticides poison our oceans and contaminate our rivers and groundwater.
- ◆ The changing climate in a warming world is likely to affect our supply of freshwater resources. Scientists predict that severe weather events will become more frequent, bringing increased flooding in wet regions while causing more frequent and severe droughts in drier areas.
- ◆ Burning fossil fuels to produce energy causes acid rain that contaminates our waterways.

Our planet's system for purification of water, like all its other systems, is delicate and balanced. We can protect it by preventing water pollution and by using only what we need.

***Read on to learn how you can make a difference.***





## facts

- ◆ More than 1 billion people in the world do not have access to safe water. Over 3 million people in the world die each year as a result of preventable water-related disease.
- ◆ Rainwater runoff from city streets may contain metals, oil, and other pollutants. Once these substances either contaminate groundwater, it is very difficult and expensive to clean it up.
- ◆ Worldwide, dam construction has displaced between 40 and 80 million people.

## Get Involved!

### Make a Difference for Water

- Monitor your own water quality. For tips and hints on monitoring the quality of streams and rivers in your own neighborhood, see <http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/monintr.html>
- Earth Day Network's *Do Good* offers quick and easy ways you can advocate for protection of our water resources. <http://www.earthday.net/action/dogood.stm>
- Educate yourself and your community about water pollution. Download a free copy of *Give Water A Hand*, a guide to education and action (available in English and Spanish). <http://www.uwex.edu/erc/gwah/>
- Learn more about how pesticides affect your water supply. The Pesticide Action Network is a network of nongovernmental organizations in over 60 countries, working to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound alternatives. <http://www.pan-international.org/>
- Learn more about big dams and their impact on the global environment. Check out International Rivers Network's great info on dams around the world. <http://www.irn.org/basics/ard>
- Put environmental stencils on storm drains. They raise people's awareness of polluted runoff that flows to rivers and lakes. <http://www.earthwater-stencils.com>
- Plant trees as part of Earth Day Network's Global Tree Planting Campaign. Planting a tree and caring for it as it grows is one of the most positive ways we protect today's water resources while creating a better future. <http://www.earthday.net/goals/trees/treeplanting.stm>
- Conduct a Community Health Assessment. Include an assessment of the quality of your water and how this affects your community. <http://www.earthday.net/goals/community.stm>
- Participate in the Earth Day 2002 World Summit letter writing initiative: Ask world leaders to attend the World Summit on Sustainable Development and take meaningful steps to address vital water issues. <http://www.earthday.net/goals/worldsummit.stm>

### ABOUT EARTH DAY NETWORK

Earth Day Network works for a peaceful, just, and sustainable world through education, campaigns, events, and publications. In addition to its year-round programs, Earth Day Network is a focal point for worldwide Earth Day organizing that culminates on Earth Day, April 22.



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