



January 2003

Quick Water Facts

The following information represents a compiled list of interesting facts concerning freshwater supplies.

- World Health Organization says that 60,000 children die each day from lack of water and/or dirty water, by far the largest health problem in the world.
- Only 20% of the world's population currently enjoys the benefits of running water.
- Every year, according to the World Bank, the amount of global water polluted equals the water consumed: Fresh water is disappearing much faster than rapid population growth.
- Since the turn of the last century, the U.S. population increased 200 percent while per capita water usage shot up 500 to 800 percent, depending on the region.
- It takes 1,000 tons of water to produce one ton of grain; agriculture consumes 75% of the world's fresh water. World Water Council says we will be 17% short of necessary water to feed global population by 2020.
- The typical American lunch - hamburger, fries, and a soft drink - takes 1,500 gallons of water to produce. Water is needed to grow the potatoes, irrigate the grain for the bun, feed the cattle, and the production of the soda.
- The overused lower Colorado River is saltier in some sections than the ocean.
- There are approximately 900 boil-water alerts every year in the United States.
- Every drop of the Colorado River is now used 17 times, herded through 49 dams and dozens of pipelines and canals, until drying up from excess use before ever reaching the Gulf of Mexico its original destination.
- One slice of cantaloupe takes 40 gallons to produce, one steak takes 1,232 gallons of water.
- Nevada, the most arid state, leads the nation in population growth.
- Water tables around Phoenix have dropped 400 feet in the last 50 years.
- Farmers in Nevada receive 90% of the State's water while their contribution to Nevada GDP is less than that made by the average casino.
- In 1922, the Colorado River Compact divided 17.5 million acre-feet of river water among six southwestern states. Today, we know that the Colorado River averages only 11.7 million acre-feet per year. This permanent shortage is the source of immense allocation problems.
- The largest users of water in California, in decreasing order of size, are: Alfalfa growers, cattle ranchers, cotton farmers, rice farmers, and lastly the City of Los Angeles.

- In the U.S. there are 58,000 water utilities, 90% of which serve less than 4,000 homes and have operating budgets of less than \$2 million.
- About 500,000 tons of pollutants pour into U.S. rivers and lakes each day.
- California accounts for 20% of all irrigation and 10% of all fresh water use in the entire U.S.