SLIDES: Unquenchable

Robert Glennon

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Citation Information


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UNQUENCHABLE
AMERICA'S WATER CRISIS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT
ROBERT GLENNON
America’s Water Crisis and What To Do About It

The Crisis

Real and Surreal Solutions

A New Approach
“There is no lack of water in the Mojave Desert unless you try to establish a city where no city should be.”

Edward Abbey
MGM CityCenter, Las Vegas
“Pat, I just have to have a water feature. I just have to. Don’t tell me I can’t do it. Just tell me how to do it.”

Steve Wynn
“When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.”

Benjamin Franklin (1774)
The Crisis
Signs of the Crisis Since 2007

- Colorado
- Orme, Tennessee
- Lake Mead
- Bowater Paper Company
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
• California’s Central Valley
• Lake Superior
• Commercial fishing off the coasts of California and Oregon.
• Idaho, Arizona and Montana
• Riverside County, California
• Atlanta, Georgia
ACF Basin
Snow-Making at Stone Mountain, Georgia
“This drought is not particularly different from previous ones.”

Todd Rasmussen
University of Georgia professor of water resources and hydrology
THE HYDRO-ILLOGICAL CYCLE

1. CONCERN
2. PANIC
3. RAIN
4. APATHY
5. DROUGHT
6. AWARENESS
Kohler
Waterhaven
Shower Tower
Real and Surreal Solutions
“The United States has built, on average, one large dam a day, every single day, since the Declaration of Independence.”

Bruce Babbitt
former Secretary of the Interior
Ogallala Aquifer Groundwater Declines 1950-2005
San Joaquin Valley
California
Sinkhole in west-central Florida caused by groundwater pumping
Riddle: Where does water in a river come from if it hasn’t rained recently?

Answer: Groundwater.
Santa Cruz River, Tucson, AZ

1942

2001
Ipswich River, Massachusetts

2003

2005
“Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody ever does anything about it.”

Mark Twain
“Water, water every where,
Nor any drop to drink.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Yuma Desalting Plant Region
“Your golden retriever may drink out of the toilet with no ill effects. But that doesn’t mean humans should do the same.”

San Diego Tribune
“I believe it is our God-given right as Californians to be able to water gardens and lawns.”

Water Harvesting Silo
A New Approach
“Civilized people should be able to dispose of sewage in a better way than by putting it in the drinking water.”

Teddy Roosevelt (1910)
“The flush toilet is mankind’s single greatest invention.”

Ann Coulter
“It is scarcity and plenty that make the vulgar take things to be precious or worthless; they call a diamond very beautiful because it is like pure water, and then would not exchange one for ten barrels of water.”

Galileo Galilei (1632)
We’re entering an era of water reallocation.
GENEVA STEEL

1. 1,750 acres of prime real estate: $46.8 million
2. Steel mills machinery & equipment to Chinese firm: $40.0 million
3. Iron ore mine to mining company: $10.0 million
4. Pollution reduction credits: $4.0 million

   TOTAL $101.8 million

5. Water rights: $102.5 million
The Buffalo’s Lament
Three objections to markets:
• Windfall profits
• Encourage sprawl
• Environmental interests can’t compete
CONCLUSION: BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM
Reforms I advocate include:

• Encouraging creative conservation
• Using price signals
• Creating market incentives
• Reexamining how we dispose of human waste
• Requiring developers to pay their own way
• Reconsidering the location of wastewater plants
• Separating storm water from sewer water
• Creating infrastructure with dual pipes to supply potable and reclaimed water
• Abandoning business as usual (more dams, diversions and wells)
• Recognizing the link between water and energy
• Appreciating the critical role played by water in the economy
• Removing barriers to water transfers while providing for government oversight of them
• Creating incentives for homeowners and others to harvest water
• Stimulating alternative waste disposal technologies
• Metering water use
• Securing water for the environment
“Anything else you’re interested in is not going to happen if you can’t breathe and the air and drink the water. Don’t sit this one out. Do something. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet.”

Carl Sagan