SLIDES: Unquenchable

Robert Glennon

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.law.colorado.edu/western-water-law-policy-and-management

Part of the Administrative Law Commons, Agriculture Law Commons, Aquaculture and Fisheries Commons, Biodiversity Commons, Climate Commons, Energy and Utilities Law Commons, Energy Policy Commons, Environmental Health and Protection Commons, Environmental Law Commons, Environmental Policy Commons, Forest Management Commons, Hydraulic Engineering Commons, Hydrology Commons, Jurisdiction Commons, Land Use Law Commons, Litigation Commons, Natural Resource Economics Commons, Natural Resources and Conservation Commons, Natural Resources Law Commons, Natural Resources Management and Policy Commons, President/Executive Department Commons, Property Law and Real Estate Commons, Public Policy Commons, Risk Analysis Commons, Science and Technology Law Commons, State and Local Government Law Commons, Water Law Commons, and the Water Resource Management Commons

Citation Information

Reproduced with permission of the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment (formerly the Natural Resources Law Center) at the University of Colorado Law School.
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
Bellagio Fountain, Las Vegas
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
Lake Lanier – Atlanta’s Principal Water Supply
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. AWARENESS
3. DROUGHT
4. PANIC
5. RAIN
6. APATHY
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
Aaron Million’s Proposed Pipeline
“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
John Day River Basin Map
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