

What's the Big Idea about Water? Protecting Our Water

This text is provided courtesy of OLogy, the American Museum of Natural History's website for kids.

Humans Put Water to Work

You've probably had a drink of water or washed your hands today. But people use water for so many other purposes, like

cleaning stuff, transportation, and generating hydroelectric power. Just as nothing can live without water, not much can be made without it, from cotton candy to cotton T-shirts.

Because water is so useful, most people live along coastlines, rivers, and lakes. Where fresh water is limited, people have used many technologies-like wells, dams, and canals-to store and move it.

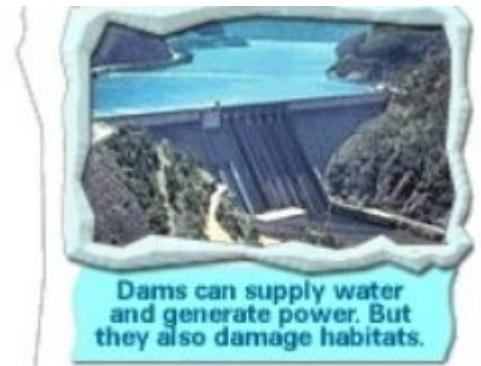


Photo Credit: BPA

Sometimes these technologies damage habitats. Other species have to compete with humans for water. This may help explain why so many creatures that live in fresh water are endangered.

We need to be smarter and more careful about how we use water in order to make sure that there's enough for all life on Earth.

We Need to Take Care of the Water Planet

Water is precious. We can't get more. How do we make sure there is enough clean, fresh water to share with all living things?

Remember that every drop we use-or waste-continues through the water cycle. Stuff we put down the drain ends up in



Photo Credit: USDA (top); R. Friedman (bottom)

someone-or something-else's water. Chemicals

like fertilizers and pesticides pollute lakes and oceans, harming the organisms that live in them.

We need to protect swamps and riverbanks. These wetlands clean water naturally and provide important habitats for many wild birds, fish, and other species. People are working to restore damaged or lost wetlands.

We can use water more wisely. For example, it takes a lot of energy to produce bottled water, and not everyone recycles the plastic bottles. We can use less, too, in simple ways like drinking tap water and turning off the faucet while we brush our teeth.

Together, we can protect fresh water now and for the future.