



Water Facts

(Facts about rivers to illustrate the importance of protecting our precious waters)

- The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System has only 10,955 river miles in it – just over one-quarter of one percent of our rivers are protected through this designation, and this protection is often contended.
- Currently, 600,000 miles of our rivers lie behind an estimated 60,000 to 80,000 dams.
- The United States has 3,500,000 miles of rivers. The 600,000 miles of rivers lying behind dams amounts to fully 17% of our river mileage.
- The Missouri River is about 2,540 miles long, making it the longest river in North America. The Nile is the longest river in the world at 4,132 miles as it travels northward from its remote headwaters in Burundi to the Mediterranean Sea.
- The 8 longest rivers in the U.S. are (in descending order) Missouri, Mississippi, Yukon, St. Lawrence (if you count the Great Lakes and its headwaters as one system), Rio Grande, Arkansas, Colorado, Ohio.
- The 8 largest rivers in the U.S., based on volume, are (in descending order) Mississippi, St. Lawrence, Ohio, Columbia, Yukon, Missouri, Tennessee, Mobile.
- Water covers nearly 3/4 of the earth's surface.
- Most of the earth's surface is permanently frozen or salty.
- Over 90% of the world's supply of fresh water is located in Antarctica.
- The earth's total allotment of water has a volume of about 344 million cubic miles. Of this:
 - * 315 million cubic miles (93%) is sea water
 - * 9 million cubic miles (2.5%) is in aquifers deep below the earth's surface.
 - * 7 million cubic miles (2%) is frozen in polar ice caps.
 - * 53,000 cubic miles of water pass through the planet's lakes and streams.
 - * 4,000 cubic miles of water is atmospheric moisture.
 - * 3,400 cubic miles of water are locked within the bodies of living things.
- If all the world's water were fit into a gallon jug, the fresh water available for us to use would equal only about one tablespoon.
- It doesn't take much salt to make water "salty". If one-thousandth (or more) of the weight of water is from salt, then the water is "saline."
- The overall amount of water on our planet has remained the same for 2 billion years.
- The U.S. consumes water at twice the rate of other industrialized nations.
- The number of people worldwide who do not have access to clean water: 1.2 billion
- gallons of water Americans flush down their toilets every day: 6.8 billion.
- Each day almost 10,000 children under the age of 5 in Third World countries die as a result of illnesses contracted by use of impure water.
- The average person needs 2 quarts of water a day.
- The average single-family home uses 80 gallons of water per person each day in the winter and 120 gallons in the summer. Showering, bathing and using the toilet account for about 2/3 of the average family's water usage.
- Water use in the U.S. alone leaped from 330 million gallons per day in 1980 to 408 per day in 1990, despite a decade of improvements in water-saving technology.

- More than 87% of the water consumed in Utah is used for agriculture and irrigation.
- A cornfield of one acre gives off 4,000 gallons of water per day in evaporation.
- It takes almost 49 gallons of water to produce just one 8 oz. glass of milk. That includes water consumed by the cow and to grow the food she eats, plus water used to process the milk.
- About 39,090 gallons of water is needed to make an automobile, tires included.
- Of the 1200 species listed as threatened or endangered, 50% depend on rivers and streams.
- Freshwater animals are disappearing five times faster than land animals.
- One gallon of water weighs 8.34 pounds.
- One mature tree in a riparian area can filter as much as 200 pounds of nitrate runoff per year.
- At least 123 freshwater species became extinct during the 20th century. These include 79 invertebrates, 40 fishes, and 4 amphibians. (There may well have been other species that were never identified.)
- Each day the sun evaporates a trillion tons of water.
- 200 million pounds of contaminants are dumped into our water resources each year.
- It can take 45 minutes for a water supplier to produce one glass of drinking water.

For more information contact:

River Keepers
325 7th St. S
Fargo, ND 58102
(701)235-2895
info@riverkeepers.org
www.riverkeepers.org

May 2005