

PRECIOUS WATER

March 22 was designate as “International Water Day” by the UN in 1992. It is a reminder for all of us to pay attention to the importance of water in our every day lives. Water is a basic human need, it is a gift which should inspire in all of us a response of gratitude and care.

Clean water is a core Minnesota value that we all want to pass on to future generations. We should keep our water clean for drinking, swimming, boating, fishing. But Minnesota's waters are not as clean as they should be. We all need to do our part to protect our water that is so critical to our health and way of life.

The principal difficulty today is not one of absolute scarcity of water, but rather fairness of distribution and water quality. Technology has blessed us with the convenience of a faucet in our homes. This is a unique convenience for only the privileged. Has this made us take water for granted and perhaps be wasteful? All people have a right to safe, clean water.

Our individualistic society contributes to our concern about our own immediate needs and overlooks the betterment of others. We are called to be our sister's and brother's keepers. Water scarcity is fast becoming one of the world's most pressing global challenges.

“Many of the wars in the last century were about oil,
but those of this century will be over water.”
Ismail Sernagelain, Former World Bank Vice President (1995)

Why is the world running out of fresh water? There are many reasons. One is that 90% of potable water in the world is groundwater. This source is increasingly threatened with depletion and contamination. Another is the replacement of indigenous water efficient crops with water intensive crops in areas where there is a scarcity of water. Another is the privatization of water.

The privatization of water moves a basic human right into the profit world. Corporations are accelerating the problem so that they, not local governments or public agencies, control the quality, supply and price of water. This results in ordinary citizens having a substantial increase in their water bills, which for some cause great hardship. And very often the quality of the water suffers. It has become 'profit over people'. Crystal clear water in bottles has found a market place in consumeristic America. Often, water bottling companies will take water straight from municipalities (from the tap), bottle it, and sell it, profiting from the people. Some soft drink seller s buy land, drain the groundwater and leave when the water is gone. The poor cannot afford to buy the bottled water and have little or no water to drink. Hence, disease

increases and it is also impossible to grow crops. Each person has the right to water for a basic livelihood. The plastic water bottles are made of fossil fuels and toxic chemicals and are not biodegradable! For more information check: www.Stopcorporateabuse.org. A good slogan could be "Public H2Own It!"

What can we do to make a positive impact on our water situation? Here are a few suggestions for individuals:

1. Drink the water from the tap and save our environment from plastic bottles.
2. Keep a pitcher of water in the frig rather than running the tap until the water is cold.
3. Only run your washing machine and dishwasher when they are full.
4. Use low or phosphate-free detergent.
5. Do not leave water running when showering, shaving, brushing your teeth, rinsing dishes, or washing your car.
6. Fix leaky pipes and dripping faucets.

To work with others in reclamation and preservation practices joining a coalition is helpful. Here are a few possibilities:

Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) 651-290-0154 or www.ProtectOurWater.info. This is an 80 member organization. A few of the member coalitions are:

Clean Water Action Alliance - 612-623-3666
Environmental Justice Advocates - 651-646-8890
Friends of the Mississippi - 651-222-2193
Izaak Walton League - 651-649-1446
Sierra Club - 612-659-9124

Eight MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS have been adopted by the 189 UN Member States. (www.un.org/millenniumgoals) One goal under #7 is to "Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water." By becoming aware and then acting in some way to alleviate the crisis concerning water on our planet you will be aiding in attaining this goal by 2015.

Peace and All Good.

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