

Sustainability and Faith

Water, water, water everywhere... Oh, yeah?

Some of us feel safe because we're living in the Great Lakes' area. We think we don't have to worry about access to water, reasonably clean water.

But you just have to read the headlines to start to wonder about that availability and how long it's going to last. Here's what I found in today's Journal-Sentinel.

First, and obviously, there's the present drought. Our front lawns tell the story. So there has been a call to not water the grass. The water level of the Lake is 8 inches below last July and 20 inches below long-term average for the month.

A gas spill in Jackson, WI, has contaminated soil of several homes and at least 3 wells. Although a business lobby urges the mining group not to continue talking about the construction of a massive open pit mine in northern Wisconsin, ground water and wells remain at risk.

The Keystone project is not settled, putting at risk more rivers and aquifers. The use of fracking in mining uses enormous amounts of water and often leads to the poisoning of fresh water with arsenic and sulfur. Many cities and states are looking to the Great Lakes for their supply of water. And so on.

Whether you accept Climate Warming is a scientific fact or not, water conservation must be a priority for each one of us. We have to hold our officials responsible for policies to protect our water. Because it's not *OUR* water - it may be water for much of the country in years to come. To have the EPA or DNR implement short cuts to speed up mining or other projects that put our water at risk is not the way to go. It'll cost much more to clean up the water, and most likely, it'll be the tax payer who doles out the money, not the corporation.

There are three things that we can do: conserve, write officials, vote for politicians who have a proven concern for the environment.

Here are some simple ways you can conserve water.

- Install water barrels around your house and garage. Places like Home Depot can show you how.
- Wear clothes more than once before washing them.
- Use earth-friendly (no phosphates) detergent.
- Water your lawn less and at night, or not at all, with rain water that you trap in rain barrels.
- Avoid automatic sprinklers; water when needed, given the weather.
- Wash and rinse dishes in a basin and reuse the "grey water" for washing your car or bicycle or adding to your compost.
- Use a bucket to hold water when washing your car or bicycle. Use rain water for washing.
- Fix leaks.
- Turn off water when shaving, brushing teeth, washing dishes or lathering.

- Turn the faucet on low or use an aerator on the tap or shower head.
- Use low flow toilets and shower heads.
- Save shower (while water is warming up), dehumidifier, or rinsing water for other uses, like watering plants.
- Refill water bottles or use a reusable bottle.

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