

Fun Facts about Water

These statistics are presented here to illustrate the importance of protecting our precious aquatic resources.

Source: <http://www.rivers.gov/waterfacts.html>

Did you know...

- One gallon of water weighs 8.34 pounds.
- The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System has only 11,434 river miles in it—just over one-quarter of one percent of our rivers are protected through this designation.
- 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 the United States. The Nile is the longest river in the world at 4,132 miles.
- 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.



- Water covers nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface.
 - Most of the earth's surface water 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 could fit into a gallon jug, the fresh water available for us to use would equal only about one tablespoon.
 - The overall amount of water on our planet has remained the same for two billion years.
 - The United States consumes water at twice the rate of other industrialized nations.
 - A corn field of one acre gives off 4,000 gallons of water per day in evaporation.
 - It takes about 6 gallons of water to grow a single serving of lettuce. More than 2,600 gallons is required to produce a single serving of steak.
 - It takes almost 49 gallons of water to produce just one eight-ounce 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 6,800 gallons of water is required to grow a day's food for a family of four.
- The average person needs 2 quarts of water a day.
- Only 7% of the country's landscape is in a riparian zone, only 2% of which still supports riparian vegetation.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that 70% of the riparian habitat nationwide has been lost or altered.
- More than 247 million acres of United States' wetlands have been filled, dredged or channelized—an area greater than the size of California, Nevada and Oregon combined.
- Riparian areas in the West provide habitat for more species of birds than all other western vegetation combined; 80% of neotropical migrant species (mostly songbirds) depend on riparian areas for nesting or migration.
- Fully 80% of all vertebrate wildlife in the Southwest depend on riparian areas for at least half of their life.
- Of the 1200 species listed as threatened or endangered, 50% depend on rivers and streams.
- One fifth of the world's freshwater fish—2,000 of 10,000 species identified—are endangered, vulnerable, or extinct. In North America, the continent most studied, 67% of all mussels, 51% of crayfish, 40% of amphibians, 37% of fish, and 75% of freshwater mollusks are rare, imperiled, or already gone.



- Freshwater animals are disappearing five times faster than land animals.
- One mature tree in a riparian area can filter as much as 200 pounds of nitrates runoff per year.
- At least 9.6 million households and \$390 billion in property lie in flood prone areas in the United States. The rate of urban growth in floodplains is approximately twice that of the rest of the country.
- If all the water in the Great Lakes was spread evenly across the continental U.S., the ground would be covered with almost 10 feet of water.