

**Review: The World's Water, 2000-2001: The Biennial Report on  
Freshwater Resources**

By Peter H. Gleick

Reviewed by [Ryder W. Miller](#)  
San Francisco, USA

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Peter H. Gleick. *The World's Water 2000-2001: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000. 335p. ISBN 1-55963-792-7 (trade paper). US\$32.00

Water, which is becoming more and more of a precious substance, is easily wasted when landlords don't get around to fixing leaky faucets, while letting the water run so the shower will be hot, while overflushing the toilet, while running the water enough so the tap water will be cold and drinkable ... In some parts of America we don't need to worry about water, but in other parts of this country and around the world, water is in short supply.

In this second report in the series, Peter Gleick reminds us that, though not usually addressed directly by UN declarations, water is essential enough to fall under the purview of our human rights. Gleick is adept at showing the disparity around the world for access to this resource. The work also instills an appreciation for how precious clean, fresh water is, and how it is integrally related to human health and food production. The disparities of access to fresh water around the world are startling: "more than 1 billion people in the developing world do not have safe drinking water, and nearly 3 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation systems necessary for reducing exposure to water related diseases" (p. 1). Useable, fresh water is only a tiny fraction of the world's water, with 97% of the world's water found in the ocean, and the majority of the remaining fresh water being found in the ice caps. Fresh groundwater comprises only 0.76% of the world's water, and rivers only 0.0002%.

*The World's Water 2000-2001* serves as an excellent resource and reference for anyone interested in ascertaining the freshwater resource situation around the world. But the science is imperfect with different researchers coming to different conclusions, and they make different projections about the water that is presently available and will be available in the future. Gleick has built upon the research that has been done and relays his own figures.

Though we should not forget about the disparity of access to water around the world, nor should we stop worrying if there will be enough water to grow all the food we need for the burgeoning world population, there are some

hopeful signs. As Gleick illustrates, dams are being removed for ecological and social reasons. Desalination techniques, though not always cost effective, have allowed us to remove the salt from ocean water, in the process producing freshwater. Desalination is used in some parts of the world where there is a scarcity of fresh water. Reclamation or the purifying of dirty water to serve human needs, is widespread. As Gleick concludes "In the final analysis, while significant social and economic barriers to wastewater reuse still remain in many regions, water managers can ill afford to ignore any plausible source of cost-effective and reliable water supply, even reclaimed water" (pp. 160-161).

The focus of the work is on water as a human need and right, with chapters on United Nations declarations, water stocks and flows, water and food, desalination, international watersheds, water recycling, dam removals, water events, and a number of other topics. With an abundant number of charts and tables, *The World's Water 2000-2001* is an indispensable resource for anyone interested in studying the availability of fresh water for the needy, growing human population.

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Ryder W. Miller <[dolphin1965@hotmail.com](mailto:dolphin1965@hotmail.com)> is an environmental and science freelance reporter, and has been published in Sierra Magazine, The Urban Ecologist, California Wild, and community newspapers.