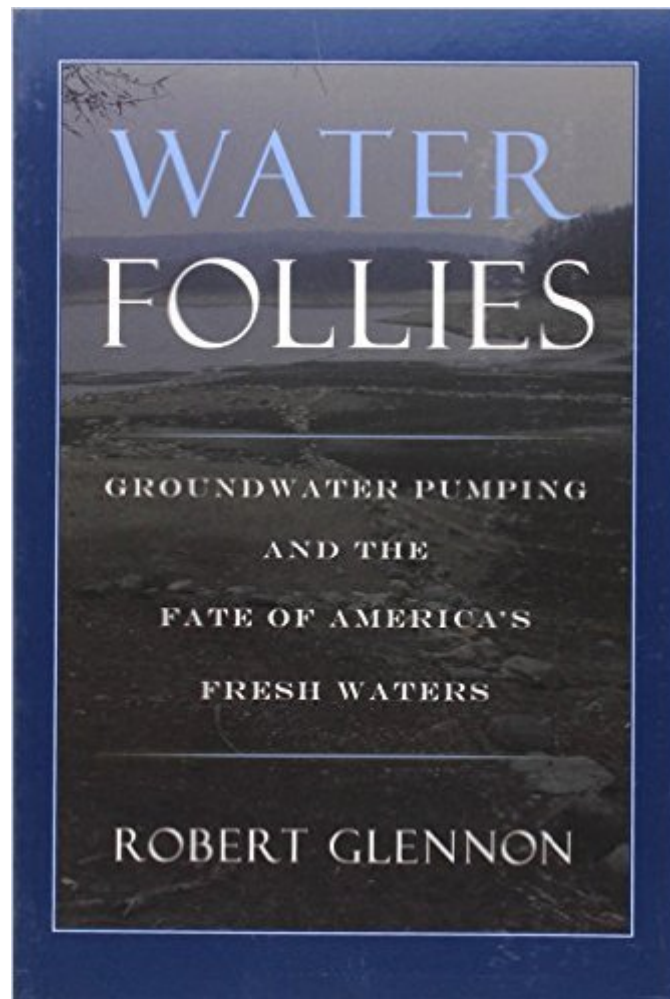


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# Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping And The Fate Of America's Fresh Waters



## Synopsis

"...a book as rich in detail as it is devastating in its argument." -SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN"Water Follies deserves a place alongside the late Marc Reisner's classic Cadillac Desert."  
-ENVIRONMENT"a lively account of hydrology" -NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS"if you want to scare yourself silly, read Water Follies, by Robert Glennon. In it you'll learn how America is irrigating itself to death-just like the Sumerians-while sucking its groundwater aquifers dry."-TORONTO GLOBE & MAIL

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Water Follies is fascinating--and frightening--and should be required reading for all Americans. Don't be put off by the pedantic subtitle: It's easy reading. Scholarly but accessible. Enlightening but not preachy. Glennon will pull you into the groundwater but his wry sense of humor will keep you from drowning.

I thought I had a pretty good understanding of issues relating to fresh water and the environment. I didn't, but I do now after reading Water Follies. This is a very important book for anyone interested in the environment. I am pretty well read on environmental topics and was surprised by how much I learned from Glennon's very readable book. The author explains very clearly the interrelationships among ground water, lakes, rivers, and the damage we have done and are doing to the environment through mindless groundwater pumping. Fresh water shortages and ground water

pumping are going to be front page stories over the next few years. Water Follies will enable you to appreciate the issues involved and to develop a well informed opinion.

Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping And The Fate Of America's Fresh Waters by Robert Glennon (Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy, University of Arizona) is a timely and much needed wake-up call concerning the all-too-frequent pollution and misuse of the groundwater tables that America relies upon for fresh drinking water. Consisting of a selection of anecdotes about how the Santa Cruz River in Tucson went dry, the rampant greed in Tampa Bay, watershed initiatives concerning Massachusetts' Ipswich River Basin, and a great deal more, Water Follies is a clarion warning and very strongly recommended contribution for Environmental Studies reference collections.

Glennon writes in plain English to warn Americans of the growing danger under our feet. We are pumping groundwater, the gift of fresh and wholesome well water, at an unsustainable rate across the country. Glennon ties groundwater to surface water and illustrates in terms that are as accessible as they are urgent that the United States is headed for a crisis of our own making. Using a number of case studies, Glennon gives us a glimpse of the American approach to ground water. Throughout much of the US, ground water is considered legally separate from surface water. Within this legal framework, there are few restrictions placed on the use (and abuse) of a critical resource that respects neither property lines nor political boundaries. Indeed, the law encourages abuse with a use-it-or-lose-it philosophy to ownership of ground water. Whoever pumps the most wins. Unfortunately, we are pumping so much ground water that rivers, lakes, and ponds across the nation are running dry--ruining many local ecosystems in the process and setting ourselves up for major economic ramifications. With the studies Glennon has chosen, he shows us the consequences of unrestricted ground water pumping for lawns, for agricultural uses, and in support of mining. In every case, Glennon demonstrates that we are doing grave damage to ourselves with our profligate pumping. This book belongs on the reading list of all high school and college students, regardless of major or course of study.

If we say "Glennon covers all the ground" in a book about water, will the reader be confused? Let's take the risk, since that is precisely what the author does in this excellent study. From the ways in which water collects or flows on the land's surface to the movement of water deep in the earth, Glennon carefully explains how water accumulates. He describes farm, mining and even water for

scenic tourist views. Water consumption has been an economic, social and legal issue since the colonies were founded almost four centuries ago. The legacy of those early efforts to distribute water to thirsty farms and communities is a central theme of this book. As settlement moved westward, readily available water waned. Contention arose between early settlers and those arriving later. Farm use of water was challenged by mining and industry as communities grew. In the West, as available surface water was used or claimed, fresh sources were sought. These proved to be buried deep beneath the surface - "ground water". Ground water was a mysterious resource to many - it still is, according to Glennon. Although it's known that, like streams, ground water reserves must be "recharged", only a little is understood about the rate of inflow or, too often, the source of refreshment. In a nation that consumes over 5000 litres per person per day, the availability of fresh water is a major consideration. Glennon presents a string of vignettes of water issues in the USA. The selection process allows him to present a spectrum of issues surrounding water availability and use. Although naturally focussing his study in the West where availability and variations in types of demand complicate an already complex area. The stops include San Antonio, a minor river in California, mining in Arizona and Nevada. The East isn't ignored - rivers in Massachusetts and Florida are impacted by groundwater pumping. A Florida case is most enlightening. Groundwater pumping drained moist soils, putting houses at risk and drying lakes. The lake problem was addressed by re-filling the lakes - with more groundwater! Nearly every case demonstrates the level of ignorance surrounding how water moves and impacts its environment. The legal issues Glennon discusses air this problem admirably. The law considerations range from "the commons" [where all have access] to those who settle first gaining full rights which followers must adapt to or contest. Western court archives are stuffed with litigation records over access. In too many cases, decisions have rested on who needs the most water - the biggest pump often wins. Glennon explains how the science of hydrography and legal decisions over water are often at best disparate. In other cases the two disciplines are sharply at odds. His conclusion suggests these divergencies can be overcome. A number of compromises will have to be reached. The biggest problem, however, is establishing realistic priorities regarding consumption. The biggest problem is data. Collecting it while water is being consumed at astronomical rates won't be a simple task. The water is running out faster than reserves can be measured. When the USA runs out of water, they will seek it elsewhere - a fact all Canadians are well aware of. [stephen a. haines - Ottawa, Canada]

Glennon is a gifted writer who sucks you in from the opening pages of the introduction and makes you care about the outcomes of the stories he presents. In a witty and accessible style he tells the

alarming story of the devastating effects of groundwater pumping, effects that are not limited to the desert areas of this country. This is a book for all of us! Although engaging and readable the book is packed with enough information to provide me (not a legal or environmental scholar) with the data I need to speak in an informed fashion to tell decision makers and friends that we need to do something about this before it's too late.

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