

The Politics of Water

The usage of water plays a critical role in the political sphere surrounding earth's most precious resource. In the United States, water use is roughly subdivided into power generation (45%), irrigation (33%) and public water supply (12%) and nearly every facet of water use saw decreased withdrawals from 2005 to 2010. While power generation is America's largest water user, water withdrawals for this sector decreased by 20% from 2005 to 2010—the largest percent change of any water use category. Thus, when considering policy issues regarding water use, it is important to understand both current water use statistics as well as how these statistics change over time.

Water quality is another hotly debated aspect of water in this country. Environmental concerns over water treatment, waste disposal and ecological damage are constantly being evaluated and negotiated by the government and the private sector. Agencies, such as the EPA, monitor water conditions around the country and can force organizations responsible for damaging water quality to fix the problem. A solution is difficult to obtain, however, because there are often multiple factors causing the problem and multiple avenues for solving it. Solutions can often take many years to come about because responsibility is vehemently fought by the organizations involved and implementation costs can be very high.

When discussing a water-related issue, it is important to understand all perspectives of the issue, since many perspectives may be completely valid. In the Tri-State Water Wars, for example, Georgia, Alabama and Florida each have legitimate reasons why they should receive a share of the water in the Chattahoochee Basin. In a debate like this, care should be taken to identify distorted data and undisclosed motives. Solutions should balance the important factors and take facts into consideration, rather than opinions and propaganda.