

Estimated Water Use in the United States

In its latest report, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) shows that Americans used 408 billion gallons of water per day, a number that has remained fairly stable since 1985 and a sign that conservation is working.

In the report, *Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 2000*, the USGS found that water use remains stable despite population growth, and that the chief water users for the Nation are power generation, agriculture and public water supply. The USGS report also finds that public supply use of water is rising, but not faster than population change.

Since 1950, USGS has compiled water-use information in cooperation with all of the states and many other federal agencies and organizations. The information reflects withdrawal of water from the Nation's rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, and ground water.

Power, Plants and People

Electric power generation, irrigation and public supply account for the bulk of water usage. Power generators make up 48 percent of the usage. Irrigation is 34 percent of the total, and public supply (water used in

homes, businesses, and industries) accounts for 11 percent of daily water usage. Self-supplied industrial users, livestock, mining, aquaculture and domestic wells, taken together, account for about 7 percent of the Nation's daily water usage.

Electric power generators, despite accounting for nearly half the Nation's daily water – a number virtually unchanged in the last 15 years – produce nearly 60 percent more energy than they did in 1985, using about the same amount of water. Technological and

How much is 408 billion gallons per day?

If you added it all together, how much water does 408 billion gallons per day add up to? Here's an idea:



Would fill the Empire State Building 1,470 times per day



Would fill 8 billion bathtubs per day



Would equal 1,430 gallons per person, per day (but real people only use 100 gallons per day on average)

regulatory changes have cut water usage by utilities from 63 gallons of water per kilowatt hour in 1950 to 21 gallons of water per kilowatt hour in 2000. Between 1950 and 2000, power production increased 15-fold, while water use by utilities increased nearly 5-fold.

Irrigation, which accounts for 34 percent of water usage, has remained stable since 1985. Ground water has become a more important source for irrigation, rising from 23 percent of irrigation water in 1950 to 42 percent in 2000. Irrigation is also becoming more important for eastern U.S. agricultural areas. In 1960, only 8 percent of irrigation water was used outside 17 western states. In 2000, that number rose to 24 percent as farmers began using irrigation as "insurance" against drought. It's also noted that widespread adoption of new technologies has reduced the amount of water used per acre farmed.

Public water supplies (as opposed to private wells) now serve 84 percent of the U.S. population, up from 62 percent in 1950. The report also shows that ground water makes up a larger percentage of public-water supply. Water saving toilets, showers and appliances as well as public water conservation all seem to be playing a role in stabilizing water use despite an increasing population.

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<http://water.usgs.gov/watuse/>



Why Study Water Use Nationally?

- Knowing about the use of water nationally is important for planning future water supplies.
- Studying trends in water use shows which regulations and initiatives are working and which have room for improvement.
- Sound planning for water depends on a sound understanding of the Nation's water resources and a sound understanding of how people will use water in the future.
- This study will help the public, decision makers, engineers and scientists better understand water use, aid in the development of long-term national water policy and ensure that information is available to take proper steps now to ensure water availability and safety for future generations of Americans.