Demand for water is increasing worldwide. Water is a necessity for people, biodiversity and the natural environment, food production, and energy production. Our growing population means growing demand for water for drinking and personal uses. It also means that an increase in global food production by 60% between 2000 and 2030 is necessary. This in turn means a further 14% increase in water usage for irrigated agriculture is required. However, this makes groundwater sources vulnerable to excessive exploitation by irrigated agriculture, and creates the risk of pollution by agricultural chemicals.

Population and economic growth, along with urban expansion, has generated enormous increases in energy consumption. Energy consumption is expected to continue increasing at a rate of 2% per year until 2020. Water is a necessary component of conventional energy production, and is increasingly being used to generate renewable sources such as tidal, geothermal, and hydro-electric power.

Food production often requires huge amounts of water, and quantities vary according to different food types. Meat production consumes far greater amounts of water than production of grains, fruits and vegetables.

Water is a necessity for biodiversity. Pollution of waterways can result in serious losses of biodiversity. High levels of pollution from inland together with the loss of coastal habitats which act as filters to pollution has resulted in areas where fish cannot survive.

Climate change and variability, which threaten to radically affect water availability in many countries, are additional problems to be addressed in the issue of our water future. By 2030, a 20% increase in months of drought is expected in Australia.

Future water security will require significant trade-offs. With the issues facing the future of water in Australia and the world, it is important that each of us commits to reducing our own water consumption.

Sally Croker, Green Office Coordinator

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Did you know…

Stormwater from the lakes at St Lucia campus is used for irrigation of sports ovals and landscaped areas, along with recycled water from the Fairfield Sewage Treatment Plant. The Lockyer Regional Council Sewage Treatment Plant also supplies water to Gatton campus.
Reducing and Managing Water Consumption

Many of the issues outlined above require changes in policy at the national and international levels. However, at an individual level, there are many ways in which you can reduce your water consumption. Here are some tips to reduce and manage water consumption in your workplace.

- Report leaks at UQ to PF Assist—Ph. 3365 2222, or email pfassist@pf.uq.edu.au.
- Ensure other staff members are aware of the procedure for reporting leaks.
- Only use the dishwasher when there is a full load.
- Don’t leave taps running.
- Place posters (such as this one) above taps to remind staff to use water wisely.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an EMS?

An EMS, or Environmental Management System, provides appropriate procedures to manage environmental issues and practices so as to minimise environmental impact and risk. For example, the Water Management Program can be found in UQ’s EMS. For further information about how the EMS fits into the overall context of sustainability at UQ, click here.

Which is more environmentally-friendly: paper towel or hand dryer?

Life cycle assessment (LCA) is a tool which quantifies a range of environmental impacts of a product from ‘cradle to grave’—the materials used, manufacture, transport, use and disposal of a product. A comparison between the life cycles of conventional hand dryers and both 100% recycled and 0% recycled content paper towels found that the conventional electric hand dryers has a smaller overall environmental impact across its entire life cycle. It was found that the processing and manufacturing required to produce the paper towel created significant environmental impacts. The full article can be found here.

Upcoming Events

New Representative Training Session
March
Details to be advised.

Clean Up Australia Day
Sunday 4th March 2012
For more information, visit http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/

Staff Development Program: Introducing a Sustainable Culture at UQ
Wednesday 14th March 2012, 2-3pm
To enrol, visit https://staffdevelopment.hr.uq.edu.au/course/EM0005

World Water Day
Thursday 22nd March 2012
For more information, visit http://www.worldwaterday.org/

Earth Hour
Saturday 31st March 2012
For more information, visit http://www.earthhour.org/

Green Office Update Session
April
Details to be advised.