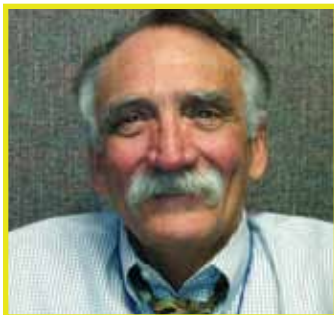


Mark Miano



Thomas Torgersen



Learning to Sustain

NBC Learn and the National Science Foundation (NSF) recently collaborated to create an educational video series on water sustainability. WQP Managing Editor Kate Cline spoke with Mark Miano of NBC Learn and Thomas Torgersen of NSF about the series and why water sustainability is a critical issue in the U.S.

Kate Cline: What inspired the “Sustainability: Water” video series?

Mark Miano: Over the past four years, NBC Learn and NSF have co-produced more than 150 original stories—about 13 hours of reporting—aimed at middle school, high school and college-level students. Building on the success of our previous work, “Sustainability: Water” is our newest collaboration—an ambitious look at the issues affecting the supply of clean freshwater in the U.S.

Thomas Torgersen: Water is not something the vast majority of us think about very often, even though it is of utmost importance to life on the planet. Ensuring an adequate supply and quality of water in light of both human needs and increasing climate variability is one of the most urgent challenges facing the world today. [NSF] wanted to produce a series of water sustainability videos with NBC Learn to raise awareness about the very real challenges we face.

Cline: Briefly, what topics does the series cover?

Miano: “Sustainability: Water” comprises seven reports by Anne Thompson, the chief environmental affairs correspondent for NBC News. The stories not only explore the threats to freshwater supplies in the U.S., but also explain how the water cycle has a direct impact on these supplies. The series includes reports on the dwindling Sierra Nevada snowpack, the impact of bark beetles on water in the Rocky Mountains, nutrient loading in Lake Erie, the diminishing Ogallala Aquifer, polluted urban streams in Baltimore, and what it takes to get water to the city of Los Angeles. There is also an overview story explaining the water cycle itself.

Torgersen: The series highlights research projects funded by NSF to understand the complexity and issues of multiple basins and sites. Topics explain significant challenges to managing the water supply.

Cline: Why is water sustainability a concerning issue?

Miano: Water is the most precious natural resource on the planet. In the U.S., there are many serious challenges to the supply of freshwater. All of the challenges are complex, which is one reason why this series is so valuable. But the stories do more than just report on the challenges—they also chronicle the scientists who are in the field, studying the problems and collecting

data. Their work will be invaluable to policymakers and local stakeholders.

Torgersen: Because water quality and quantity are so important to life on the planet, we wanted to educate people about its complexity, and in particular the complexity of the water cycle when man has altered, and continues to alter, its components. We thought it important to enhance people’s understanding of the interactions between the water system, climate variability, land use changes, agricultural impacts, etc.

Cline: What factors are affecting water sustainability?

Torgersen: The challenges facing the U.S. in terms of water sustainability are many and complex, ranging from rapid climate variability to infectious diseases, population growth, land use change, agricultural practices and other human activities. These are only a few of the significant challenges to providing people everywhere with a sufficient supply and quality of water.

Cline: What is being done to combat this issue?

Torgersen: There is no one, cure-all solution to sustaining America’s water supply, but NSF research indicates one important lesson: The vast majority of resilient solutions require the integration of good science, good engineering, nature’s original role and an understanding of the views and mandates of policy management and society.

Cline: What can people do at a personal level to improve water sustainability?

Torgersen: Awareness of the challenges is the first step to responsible civic action that advances national health. NSF would like citizens at all levels to watch these videos, invest themselves in the science and become educated about the issues facing this vital natural resource. *wqp*

Mark Miano is executive editor of NBC Learn. Miano can be reached at contactus@nbclearn.com. Thomas Torgersen is program officer for hydrologic sciences for the National Science Foundation. Torgersen can be reached at info@nsf.gov.

For more information on this subject write in 1010 on this issue’s reader service card.

EPA Encourages Consumers to ‘Shower Better’

The U.S. EPA is encouraging consumers to “shower better.” The second annual Shower Better campaign encourages energy and water utilities, organizations, manufacturers, retailers and plumbers to remind consumers to look for WaterSense-labeled showerheads, which not only save water and energy, but are independently certified for performance attributes such as spray force and water coverage.



Nine U.S. Cities May Have Water Emergencies in Coming Months

Based on data released by the U.S. Drought Monitor, nine urban areas are under “exceptional drought” conditions and may experience widespread crop damages, even more severe water restrictions and water emergencies in coming months. The cities cited in the report are Santa Fe, N.M.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Corpus Christi, Texas; Brownsville, Texas; Harlingen, Texas; Colorado Springs, Colo.; McAllen, Texas; Pueblo, Colo.; and Lubbock, Texas.

WQA Opposes Proposed NYC Refrigerant Plan

The Water Quality Assn. joined the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers to encourage Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York to veto changes in city code related to the recovery of refrigerant from discarded appliances. Under the new code, original equipment manufacturers would be responsible for the recovery of refrigerants from the appliances that were manufactured by them and that are disposed of by residential generators.

USGS Report Sheds Light on Public Supply Well Contamination

A U.S. Geological Survey report described key factors that help determine the vulnerability of public supply wells to contamination, including the sources of the water and contaminants in the water that infiltrate the ground and are drawn into a well; the geochemical conditions encountered by the groundwater; and the range of ages of the groundwater that enters a well.



New Mexico Supreme Court Releases Bounds v. State Decision

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court of New Mexico ruled that the domestic well statute does not violate the prior appropriation doctrine and does not violate the due process clause of the New Mexico Constitution. Bounds challenged the domestic well statute, which requires the state engineer to grant a permit for a domestic well, without any investigation, whenever a permit is requested. *wqp*



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