



Jim Thebaut

Facing Water Scarcity

Drought, failing infrastructure and severe weather events all threaten the availability of water, both domestically and abroad. *Water Quality Products* Associate Editor Amy McIntosh spoke with Jim Thebaut, creator of the “Running Dry” documentary series, about these issues and what can be done to resolve water scarcity.

Amy McIntosh: What are some of the major drought issues facing the Southwest?

Jim Thebaut: The American Southwest is at a crossroads in maintaining its quality of life as well as its economy, and water is the centerpiece of this reality. The challenge is to establish a long-term sustainable water supply throughout the region for its growing population without compromising its fragile ecosystem. Drought conditions, low flows and over-allocation in the Colorado River, the water-energy nexus, legal issues, water cutbacks, storage concerns, pollution, aging infrastructure and conservation constraints create concerns.

For example, neither of California’s two major cities—San Francisco and Los Angeles—have natural water sources and must import water from great distances across demanding, desolate terrain. If the flow of water from any of these sources were to stop because of drought conditions or a natural disaster, the American Southwest’s economy would experience a knockout blow. Furthermore, the current water systems in California are strained to the maximum because they were designed to serve a population of 25 million and now must support 38 million, with future population projections of 50 million or more by mid-century.

McIntosh: What issues are affecting water scarcity worldwide?

Thebaut: In many parts of the world, water is a luxury and extremely difficult to obtain, and the human impact is profound. More than 3,575,000 people die each year from water-related diseases and 4,000 children die daily because [water is] polluted or non-existent. In addition, 884 million people on the planet live without safe drinking water and basic sanitation services.

I’m convinced that governments around the world are oblivious to the signs that the planet is in trouble and heading for a calamity unless they implement solutions. Global leaders are failing to recognize the actuality of significant population growth—that intense drought conditions and severe weather events are occurring around the planet—and issues like energy scarceness, potential for pandemics, a profound absence of sanitation, a growing lack of agricultural land and food supply, severe poverty conditions, degradation of the environment and lack of childhood education. These humanitarian conditions already create local violence with illegal arms. Worse, present circumstances will likely spawn nuclear arms proliferation in those regions, which are

only seeking to secure access to scarce resources.

McIntosh: What actions can be taken to alleviate the threat of water scarcity?

Thebaut: The U.S. could be a leader in solving the global crisis, but its government is more oriented toward building up its defense budget instead of confronting the humanitarian crisis by implementing integrated management programs, economic and financial policies, and specific strategies that would uplift the lives of millions and challenge and diffuse international terrorism and crime. This would include encouraging investment in developing nations to build infrastructure and generate economic development, which would produce jobs and income. This would involve public-private partnerships and inclusive innovation.

Domestically the U.S. government could assume leadership by working with state and local governments to generate a national water strategy, which would include: fixing the nation’s infrastructure; producing new sources of water; replenishing groundwater aquifers; accomplishing conservation in all its forms; harvesting rainwater in all buildings and structures; creating regional environmental planning, particularly in drainage basins; and implementing or upgrading reuse, wastewater treatment, renewable energy and desalination.

McIntosh: Tell us about your documentary series.

Thebaut: The “Running Dry” series is a comprehensive public information/education project, established to raise awareness of the devastating impacts of water shortages around the world. The franchise was inspired by the late Sen. Paul Simon and his book *Tapped Out*. The project’s centerpieces are “Running Dry” and “The American Southwest: Are We Running Dry?”

“Running Dry” was filmed in China, India, the Middle East and the U.S. and has been screened across the world since 2006. The initial documentary led to the enactment of the Sen. Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which authorizes funding for water and sanitation projects in developing nations. *wqp*

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For more information on this subject write in 1008 on this issue’s reader service card.

Well Water Industry Gains Legal Victory in Georgia

The Superior Court of Washington County found unconstitutional a city of Sandersville, Ga., ordinance that prohibits drilling of wells within city limits. Furthermore, the court found that a private landowner has, under the Georgia and U.S. constitutions, the right to drill a well on his or her property, subject only to the government’s reasonable rules and regulations for the protection, safety and health of its citizens.



ASPE, WQA Partner to Promote Water Treatment Standards

The American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE) and the Water Quality Assn. (WQA) signed an agreement to promote and advance three WQA standards for recognition as consensus American National Standards by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). ASPE will be responsible for advancing the standards for adoption by ANSI and maintaining the standards according to ANSI accreditation procedures. WQA will provide technical support in the standards development process and recruit members to volunteer for ASPE’s standards-related committees.

WaterSense Announces 2014 Fix a Leak Week Theme

The 2014 Fix a Leak Week theme is “Chasing Leaks.” WaterSense is encouraging its partners to organize footraces or other community events that educate consumers on how to chase down leaks and stop wasting water during its sixth annual Fix a Leak Week, March 17 to 23. Several WaterSense partners across the country have planned races featuring “running toilets” and “sprinting sprinklers” to illustrate what can happen when leaks get out of control.



NSPF Releases 2014 Pool & Spa Operator Handbook

The 2014 edition of the Pool & Spa Operator Handbook, published by the National Swimming Pool Foundation, includes important updates and a new look. Offered in English and Spanish with both imperial and metric units, this training and reference manual is ideal for professionals who help keep pools safe and open.

EPA Proposes Cleanup Plan for Puerto Rico Superfund Site

The U.S. EPA proposed a plan to clean up contaminated soil and groundwater at the Cidra groundwater contamination site in Cidra, Puerto Rico. The site includes portions of a commercial district and an industrial park. EPA’s plan calls for a combination of cleanup technologies within distinct areas of the site, specifically a dry cleaning business and a vacant property owned by Ramallo Brothers Printing Inc., to protect people’s health and the environment. *wqp*



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