

Water Reading List

These are some books of direct relevance to understanding the subject of water resources. They are generally written for the non-technical audience, and should be an easy read. Quoted materials are publishers' notes, unless otherwise indicated.

A Civil Action by Jonathan Harr. "This riveting work of legal reportage is at once the story of an emotionally explosive lawsuit and a searing expose of the American legal system. When young lawyer Jan Schlichtman initiates a civil suit against two of the nation's largest corporations who stand accused of the deaths of children in a Massachusetts suburb, he finds himself locked in an epic struggle that costs him his home, his reputation, and very nearly his sanity."

Cadillac Desert by Mark Reisner. "The story of the American West is the story of a relentless quest for a precious resource: Water. It is a tale of rivers diverted and dammed, of political corruption and intrigue, of billion-dollar battles over water rights, of ecologic and economic disaster. In Cadillac Desert, Marc Reisner writes of the earliest settlers, lured by the promise of paradise, and of the ruthless tactics employed by Los Angeles politicians and business interests to ensure the city's growth. He documents the bitter rivalry between two government giants, the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in the competition to transform the West."

Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australasian Lands and People by Tim Flannery. "In this illustrated ecological history, acclaimed scientist and historian Flannery follows the environment of the islands through the age of dinosaurs to the age of mammals and the arrival of humans, to the European colonizers and industrial society. Penetrating, gripping, and provocative, this book combines natural history, anthropology, and ecology on an epic scale."

Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America by John M. Barry. "This gripping account of the mammoth flooding of 1927 that devastated Mississippi and Louisiana and sent political shock waves to Washington is a brilliant match of scholarship and investigative journalism." [Jason Berry]

Rivers for Life: Managing Water for People and Nature by Sandra Postel and Brian Richter. "Rivers for Life is a clarion call to society for the need to balance human demands with the needs of our world's rivers, the arterial system of life on this planet. The authors describe the vanguard movement to restore rivers and to reconnect rivers with their flood plains, portraying the under-appreciated life support services our rivers perform, their ecological function, and the threats to riverine ecosystems."

Water Wars: Drought, Flood, Folly, and the Politics of Thirst by Diane Raines Ward. "This is a wonderful book, a wake-up call of startling clarity and insight, with a flood of facts and anecdotes that place the abstract into riveting human perspective. I will never turn on the tap again without thinking about where water comes from and where it goes." [Ken Burns, producer and director of the Civil War, Baseball, and Jazz documentaries]

Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters by Robert Glennon. This book is "a timely and much needed wake-up call concerning the all-too-frequent pollution and misuse of the groundwater tables that America relies upon for fresh drinking water. Consisting of a selection of anecdotes about how the Santa Cruz River in Tucson went dry, the rampant greed in Tampa Bay, watershed initiatives concerning Massachusetts' Ipswich River Basin, and a great deal more, Water Follies is a clarion warning and very strongly recommended contribution for Environmental Studies reference collections." [Midwest Book Review]

Confluence of a River, The Environment, Politics, and the Fate of All Humanity by Nathaniel Tripp. Tripp, author of *Father, Soldier, Son* (1997), has long been fascinated by the flow of water: "I could find more in the swamp down below the high school than I ever could in the classrooms." And he has spent some of his happiest days on the Connecticut River, paddling its waterways with his sons, investigating Atlantic salmon restoration, and visiting its broad, glittering reservoirs.

Each chapter in this slender volume discusses a specific watershed of the Connecticut, which divides Vermont and New Hampshire, with the exception of a side trip to northern Quebec. Tripp is a knowledgeable guide, whether discussing the dwarf wedge mussel or hydroelectric politics. The state of our rivers is grim, to be sure, but one person, argues Tripp, can make a difference. Much like the beginnings of a river itself: "The river begins as all rivers do, with a drop of rain, a wisp of fog." [Rebecca Maksel]

Dam Break in Georgia: Sadness and Joy at Toccoa Falls by Kenneth Neill Foster, K. Neill Foster. A true story about the flooding disaster of Toccoa Falls College on November 6, 1977. A moving story telling of the horror and subsequent victory, and of the people involved. Kelly Barnes Dam, located above the Toccoa Falls Bible College near Toccoa, Georgia, failed in the early morning hours of November 6, 1977. The campus was inundated within minutes. One dormitory had 8 ft of water on the ground floor. A trailer park associated with the college was destroyed as 10 ft of water rushed through it. Thirty-nine deaths and \$2.8 million in damages occurred during this flash flood.

Encounters with the Archdruid by John McPhee. "Born in 1915, the mountaineer and outdoorsman David Brower has arguably been the single most influential American environmentalist in the last half of the 20th century; even his erstwhile foes at the Department of the Interior grudgingly credit him with having nearly single-handedly halted the construction of a dam in the heart of the Grand Canyon, and he has converted thousands, even millions, of his compatriots to the preservationist cause through his work with the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and other organizations." [Gregory McNamee]

The Founding Fish by John McPhee. "In his newest (after *Annals*), McPhee leads readers out to the river-pole and lures in hand-to-angle for American shad. McPhee knows where the fish are running, so to speak, and he opens with a tall tale about his long vigil with a giant roe shad on the line. Night falls, a crowd gathers on a nearby bridge to watch and still the fish refuses to roll over; however embellished, it's a comic story. He then probes the natural history of the shad, known as *Alosa sapidissima* and traces the fish's storied place in American history and economics. The shad manages to turn up, at least in legend, at George Washington's camp at Valley Forge; it waylaid Confederate General Pickett in the defense of Richmond and hastened the end of the Civil War; it even played a minor role in John Wilkes Booth's murder of Lincoln. McPhee consults specialists like a fish behaviorist, an anatomist of fishes and a zooarcheologist who studies 18th-century trash pits to see whether Washington indeed ate shad at Mount Vernon. The author studies under a master shad dart maker and in an appendix gives recipes, too. McPhee reaffirms his stature as a bold American original. His prose is rugged, straightforward and unassuming, and can be just as witty. This book sings like anglers' lines cast on the water. It runs with the wisdom of ocean-going shad." [Publishers Weekly]

The Control of Nature by John McPhee. "Master how-it-works writer John McPhee has instructed his readers in the arcana of how oranges are commercially graded, how mountains form, how canoes are built and oceans crossed. In *The Control of Nature* he turns his attention once more to geology and the human struggle against nature. In one sketch, he explores the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' unrealized plan to divert the flow of the Mississippi River into a tributary, the Atchafalaya, for flood control; in another, he looks at the ingenious ways in which an Icelandic engineer saved a southern harbor on that island from being destroyed by a lava flow; in a third, he examines a complex scheme to protect Los Angeles from boulders ejected from mountains by compression and tectonic movement. As always, McPhee combines a deep knowledge of his subject with a narrative approach that is wholly accessible; you may not have thought you were interested in earthquakes and flood control, but he gently leads you to take a passionate concern in such matters."

When the Rivers Run Dry by Fred Pearce. "Veteran science writer Pearce (*Turning Up the Heat*) makes a strong - and scary - case that a worldwide water shortage is the most fearful looming environmental crisis. With a drumbeat of facts both horrific (thousands of wells in India and Bangladesh are poisoned by fluoride and arsenic) and fascinating (it takes 20 tons of water to make

one pound of coffee), the former New Scientist news editor documents a "kind of cataclysm" already affecting many of the world's great rivers. The Rio Grande is drying up before it reaches the Gulf of Mexico; the Nile has been dammed to a trickle; reservoirs behind ill-conceived dams sacrifice millions of gallons of water to evaporation, while wetlands and floodplains downriver dry up as water flow dwindles. In India, villagers lacking access to clean water for irrigation and drinking are sinking tube wells hundreds of feet down, plundering underground supplies far faster than rainfall can replace them the same fate facing the Ogallala aquifer of the American Midwest. The news, recounted with a scientist's relentless accumulation of observable fact, is grim." [Publishers Weekly]

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond. "Explaining what William McNeill called The Rise of the West has become the central problem in the study of global history. In Guns, Germs, and Steel Jared Diamond presents the biologist's answer: geography, demography, and ecological happenstance. Diamond evenhandedly reviews human history on every continent since the Ice Age at a rate that emphasizes only the broadest movements of peoples and ideas. Yet his survey is binocular: one eye has the rather distant vision of the evolutionary biologist, while the other eye - and his heart - belongs to the people of New Guinea, where he has done field work for more than 30 years." [Amazon.com]

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed by Jared Diamond. [This book] "is the glass-half-empty follow-up to his Pulitzer Prize-winning Guns, Germs, and Steel. While Guns, Germs, and Steel explained the geographic and environmental reasons why some human populations have flourished, Collapse uses the same factors to examine why ancient societies, including the Anasazi of the American Southwest and the Viking colonies of Greenland, as well as modern ones such as Rwanda, have fallen apart. Not every collapse has an environmental origin, but an eco-meltdown is often the main catalyst, he argues, particularly when combined with society's response to (or disregard for) the coming disaster. Still, right from the outset of Collapse, the author makes clear that this is not a mere environmentalist's diatribe. He begins by setting the book's main question in the small communities of present-day Montana as they face a decline in living standards and a depletion of natural resources. Once-vital mines now leak toxins into the soil, while prion diseases infect some deer and elk and older hydroelectric dams have become decrepit. On all these issues, and particularly with the hot-button topic of logging and wildfires, Diamond writes with equanimity." [Jennifer Buckendorff]

A.D. New Orleans after the Deluge by Josh Neufeld. A graphic history of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the aftermath. The author traces the experiences of five different groups of people as they decide to stay or evacuate, the storm, and trying to start life over after the storm.

Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What To Do About It by Robert Glennon. "Robert Glennon captures the irony - and tragedy - of America's water crisis in a book that is both frightening and wickedly comical. From manufactured snow for tourists in Atlanta to trillions of gallons of water flushed down the toilet each year. Unquenchable reveals the heady extravagances and everyday inefficiencies that are sucking the nation dry."

The Two-mile Time Machine: Ice Cores, Abrupt Climate Change, and Our Future by Richard B. Alley.

The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization by Brian M. Fagan

Pompeii by Robert Harris.

Salmon by Geoff Meggs.

Salmon Country: A History of the Pacific Salmon by Robert H. Busch.

Angle of Repose by Wallace Stegner.

The River Why by David James Duncan.

Monkey Wrench Gang by Edward Abbey.

The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise by Michael Grunwald.

Wetland Drainage, Restoration, and Repair by Thomas R. Biebighauser.

The Great Lakes Water Wars by Peter Annin.

Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalists Guide to Global Warming by Bjorn Lomborg.

Swimming in Circles: Aquaculture and the End of Wild Oceans by Paul Molyneaux.