

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



CAN WE DRINK THE WATER?

Water Use

The Issue: The conservation of Great Lakes water supplies for industry, agriculture, power generation, and domestic uses.

- The Great Lakes currently supply drinking water to millions of Great Lakes basin residents. Their continued use as a plentiful source of drinking water is dependent both on water quality and quantity for decades to come.
- Great Lakes water use is projected to increase over time as a result of diversions, population growth, and climate change.
- Water use and future water supplies are becoming more of an issue in the region; however, water metering and other conservation tactics have not been comprehensively applied throughout the basin's municipalities.
- Water use analyses help to evaluate our current consumption practices and how this affects future drinking water supplies.

The Indicator - SOGL 2003

This indicator examines water use (per capita) in the Great Lakes basin to measure, indirectly, the demand for water resources and the amount of wastewater generated.

The Assessment

Canadian average per capita water use (in municipalities greater than 1000 people) decreased by 15 percent from 1983 to 1999 as a result of water saving technologies. U.S. average per capita use increased approximately 10 percent from 1985 to 1995, possibly resulting from an increase in public use.

Approximately 95 percent of Great Lakes water used in both countries is used for hydroelectric power. Other significant water uses are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

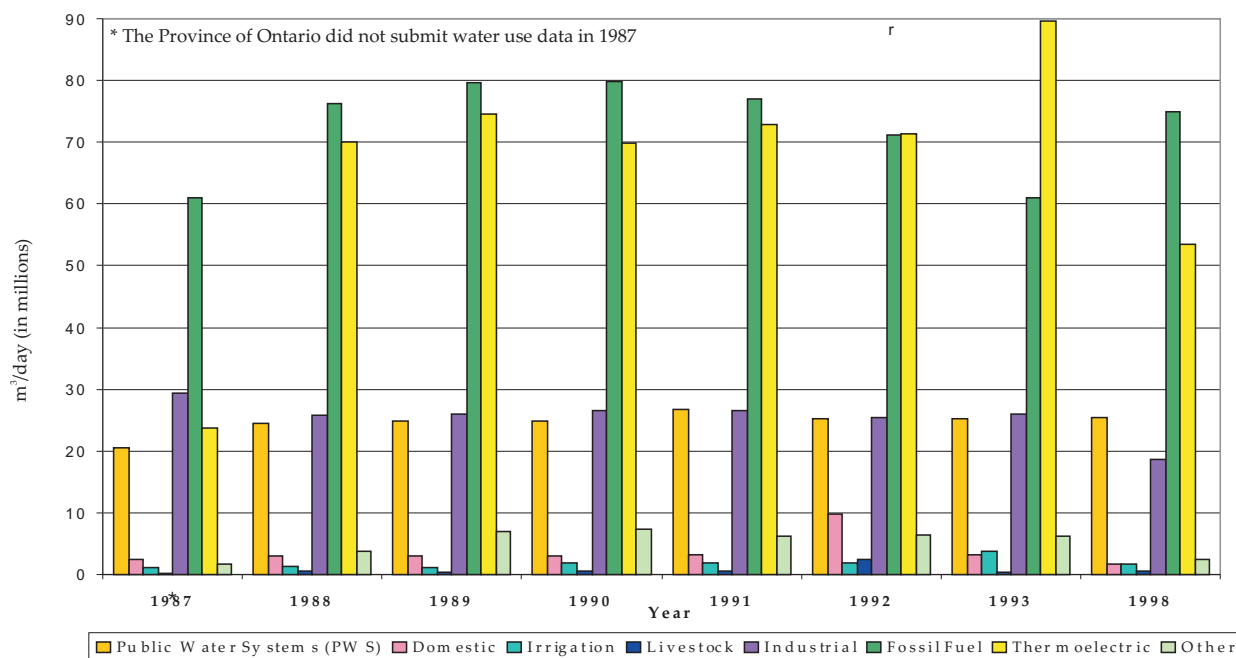


Figure 1. Great Lakes water, other surface water and groundwater use (excluding hydroelectric water uses).

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The Outlook

Water scarcity is an issue projected to be of global importance over the next 50 years. Water use in the Great Lakes will continue to increase especially for thermoelectric power, agriculture, and residential uses. Some Great Lakes waters are currently diverted for use outside the basin. Projections indicate that there will be increasing demand for water diversions in years to come.

There is a need for Great Lakes municipalities to implement water conservation strategies to reduce excessive water use in the basin. The use of water meters and different pricing are possible scenarios that may encourage water conservation

and maintain an ample quantity for future generations.

For More Information...

Visit the web site, www.binational.net, to access the *State of the Great Lakes 2003* and other references reporting on the state of the Great Lakes.

