

Good to the Last Drop?

Recently I was reminded of a friend's statement: "If you are not concerned, you are not paying attention!" In speaking to the Gloucester Master Gardeners on the coming water crisis in Virginia, geologist Frank W. Fletcher closed his presentation with a picture of that goofy guy from MAD magazine whose mantra was 'Who, me worry?'"

Dr. Fletcher has retired to Reedville, Va. after a distinguished career that began with a PHD from Univ. of Rochester in geology and included authorship of both scientific articles and a textbook. He continues teaching through his website <http://wwwgroundwatervirginia.org> dedicated to the protection of the ground water supply of the Virginia Coastal Plain.

Because historically Virginia has been blessed with abundant water we find it hard to believe that this abundance has ended, that we are removing more water from the ecosystem than is being replenished. Our water supply is 'maxed out' as withdrawal in Tidewater exceeds any possibility of replenishment.

The amount of water that served the Indians and Colonists and even the 1 million Virginians in 1800 is not adequate for the nearly 8 million Virginians of the 21st Century. We are familiar with the problems facing desert areas of western US so it seems counter-intuitive to see a problem in verdant Virginia.

Looking out over the Chesapeake Bay to the vast ocean we see a wealth of water, looking landward we see streams and rivers of water, brackish water. We think American ingenuity can remove the salt? Yes, expensive desalinization, \$\$\$, is on the rise worldwide, even here. For reasons possibly bred into our genes we embrace the myth of abundance: from its position on the list of 7 deadly sins, 'wanting it all, right now', has become an economic virtue.

We are reluctant to face facts; denial is fashionable and we feel entitled to use Virginia's water to the last drop. Our esteemed state legislature tips its hat to the problem but what passes for law, the Ground Water Act of 1992, is really mere suggestion. However, there are solutions once we recognize the problem. Water scarcity prevails the world over as water tables fall and rivers no longer flow to where they once sustained life. We can learn a new way of using this precious resource: next week, we will visit the 'hows'.