



Anniversary Story

“Write Your Story”

By Jane Griffin, President, The Groundwater Foundation

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Seven years and five months ago I started my story with The Groundwater Foundation – and it was a memorable day as my predecessor, Susan Seacrest, went through the magnitude of files filled with activities, accomplishments, and stories about her remarkable work at the Groundwater Foundation. Let’s just say I was overwhelmed and was really questioning what I had gotten myself into – how would I continue to move this organization forward as Susan had so gallantly for 23 years?

Each day on the job brought new stories and with each story more insight to the key to success – the collective effort of everyone involved. These stories and the collective efforts of our board, staff, partners, Groundwater Guardians, Green Sites, program participants and the investment of our members, sponsors and funders are what inspire me each day. If we only looked as deep as the ink in many stories in the media we could easily be paralyzed by the doom and gloom they present. But, instead, if we dig deeper we recognize that we can rise to the challenge a growing population and escalating societal demands put on our groundwater supplies.

The challenges are enormous – according to the United Nation’s World Water Development Report, 2015, Water for A Sustainable World (WWDR 2015), an estimated 20% of the world’s aquifers are currently over-exploited. This, and other practices are undermining the environment’s capacity to provide ecosystem services, including clean water. And the situation is only going to grow more complex. As pointed out in the WWDR 2015, the world’s population is estimated to be 9 billion in just a few decades. Consequently, 60% more food will need to be produced globally, manufacturing is expected to increase by 400%, and global demand for water is estimated to exceed supply by 40% if we continue business as usual. Impacts of climate change on our water supply will create difficulties as well. It is imperative that we restore the balance between demand and supply. Looking at the quality side of the equation we must also be conscientious of what we put on our ground, remembering that it may end up in our drinking water. While it is true that some contamination of groundwater supplies is due to natural causes, like arsenic, the majority is caused by human action¹.

It may sound dire, but don’t let this information paralyze you. Generation after generation – actually civilization after civilization – has faced the challenges of water management. We can too:

ACT – Reduce your water footprint by 30% (look for our free [30 by 30 app](#) in the Apple and Google Play stores). It may seem like a small thing, but look at the numbers: in the U.S. each person uses an average of 100 gallons per day for direct water use (i.e. water we drink, use to wash, cook and water our lawns,

¹ UNESCO, Zaporozec, A., (2002), Groundwater Contamination Inventory, IHP-VI, Series on Groundwater No. 2, page 25

etc.). In Europe the average is 50 gallons/day. Here in the U.S. we can do better. If each of us reduces our water use by 30 gallons/day (30 x 365 x 320,090,857) we would save 3,504,994,884,150 gallons annually!

We can also impact our indirect water use (i.e. the water it takes to produce our clothes, our cars, our appliances, etc.). All of our decisions and choices drive the market and therefore drive the demand. Manufacturers respond to the demand by producing what is popular. Let's demand the right products!

SHARE – Brag about what you are doing. Share your newly adopted habits with your friends, family and colleagues. Encourage them to do the same too. Groundwater is magical – share the magic!

INSPIRE – Water is life, water needs us to speak for it and to protect it. Inspire action on behalf of water and to ensure it is available for future generations, too.

EDUCATE – We need to foster generations of scientists, inventors, leaders who can develop the technology and improve our approaches and systems of water management and distribution. We need to be educated and our youth does too, so future generations are capable of taking these actions to another level.

INVOLVE – We need water and water needs us to be its guardian. Water management is the responsibility of many different people in public and private sector. How can this shared responsibility be used as a rallying point around which different stakeholders can work together and make informed decisions – instead of serving as a point of divergence? The [Groundwater Guardian](#) program is a proven model of being a rallying point - and it has served communities across North America as a framework to involve their local population in proactive protection and conservation efforts. Get involved with a local Groundwater Guardian team or start your own!

SUSTAIN – Over the past few decades the rising living standards have led to sharp increases in water use, and this can be unsustainable, especially where supplies are scarce and/or vulnerable. We must achieve sustainable living standards, which means altering consumption patterns. Let's look at our individual behaviors, and make choice, perhaps reducing meat consumption, considering smaller homes, using vehicles and appliances that are energy-efficient. The fact is that there is enough water available on Earth to meet the world's growing needs, but without properly managing and sharing the water resources there will be water shortages. We need to each live a sustainable lifestyle (in our professional and personal roles) to ensure our children's grandchildren can do the same.

IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING.

A lot has been done, but the fact of the matter is that the work is never done. Threats to our water supply, whether they be quality or quantity issues, are ongoing. Together we can write the story of how individually we each did our part – and collectively we meet the challenge.

Let's get started.

Celebrate with us at the [2015 Groundwater Foundation National Conference!](#)