

Importance of the Water Industry

By Landrie Schmidt

Freshwater is the most coveted natural resource on earth. Everything we do, regardless of where we may live, our age, or our occupation, depends on water. The water industry helps us control and conserve this resource. When you look at the overall picture of water in general, it's hard to believe that 71% of the earth is covered in water! It's also important to note that only 2.5% of the water on earth is freshwater. Only a small amount of freshwater on earth is available to us to use. Most of our freshwater is frozen in the ice caps and glaciers or is in deep underground aquifers. Since the majority of water needed to survive is unavailable to us, we have to use what is available wisely.

Growing up on the farm, I just always thought our well would always give us good water to drink. I never stopped to think about where the water came from or if it was healthy and if it would ever stop flowing. Once I moved to the city and my mom became involved with water operations, only then did I realize there is more to water than just simply turning on the faucet. Our federal and state governments closely regulate how water is treated, dispersed, consumed, and disposed of. Being the daughter of a municipal water operator and through my internship with our city, I've learned the importance of water regulations and how they protect those who consume it. I'm fortunate to have received an insider's view of operations including chlorine testing, usage reports and some of the storage and distribution side. These things are just a small part of the water industry but are vital to health and human safety.

The United States Bureau of Reclamation is our nation's largest water supplier. They control hundreds of reservoirs and are a major supplier of hydropower for the United States power grid. Through their conservation efforts and careful management, they plan for future sustainability.

Being from rural North Dakota I have family and friends who are farmers and ranchers. I know all too well the impact water has on agriculture operations, especially during drought years. Good water is needed to maintain a healthy herd of animals. River water (or well water) is used for irrigating crops to get the best yield. Without water, almost all aspects of an agricultural entity would suffer.

To put it simply, water is the key to life. We depend on the knowledge of people and organizations in the water industry to guide us in conserving this most precious resource. They teach us to become good stewards and how to protect our water sources and how to protect those consuming or working in it. Thank you to all the men and women working to protect our water supply.