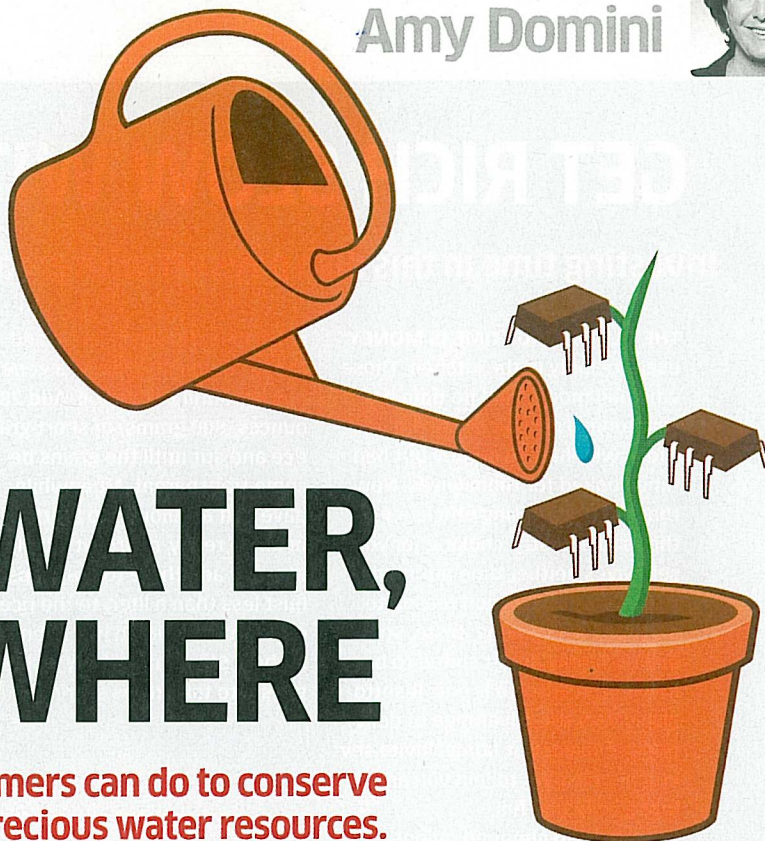




# WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

What companies and consumers can do to conserve precious water resources.



**AS A CHILD, I GREW UP IN A DAIRY FARMING COMMUNITY. THERE WEREN'T MANY** kids around, so I learned to be alone. I enjoyed wandering across the cow field to a very small stream that ran through the farm. I'd spend hours waiting for tadpoles in the water or salamanders in the mud to reveal themselves.

That farm is gone; 50 houses occupy the space. The stream is gone, as are the many life forms that depended on it. It's happening all over the world. Fresh water is essential to human life, yet it's an increasingly scarce resource. Now the scarcity has moved from hurting tadpoles to hurting people.

As the world population continues to grow, so do the demands on the supply of water. Many countries, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, face horribly inadequate water supplies. These don't simply lead to discomfort; they lead to misery and death. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 3,800 children die every day from diseases associated with the lack of safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The FAO found that 1.1 billion people don't have access to the necessary five to 13 gallons (20 to 50 liters) of fresh water to meet their basic needs, and 2.6 billion people don't have proper sanitation.

The way a company uses water can help alleviate suffering. In India, PepsiCo faced charges that its bottling plants drastically lowered local water levels and contaminated groundwater. In response, the firm decided to work on watershed protection,

sanitation and preservation. One outcome, the use of reverse osmosis filters, conserves 280 million gallons (a billion liters) of water each year. If every company instituted sound water conservation policies, the impact would be enormous.

But there's a role for people, too. We can help, in the twin roles of consumer and investor. As investors, much has happened. One example occurred when responsible investors approached the semiconductor industry about water usage. Cleaning electronic chips requires highly purified water. It can take two gallons (eight liters) of ordinary water to yield a gallon of "ultra-pure water." Intel reports that as of 2008, it had invested more than \$100 million in water conservation projects and reclaims more than 3 billion gallons of water (12 billion liters) a year. When investors advocate, they have impact.

Consumers play an important role, too. At Domini Social Investments, we've joined with the many individuals and small businesses that have taken the "Think Outside the Bottle Pledge" sponsored by Corporate Accountability International (CAI). We no longer purchase bottled water for the office; we provide filtered water and seltzer machines

for employee use. We did this after learning that for each gallon of water that's bottled, three gallons (11 liters) of water are used to make the bottle. CAI tells us that Americans bought 8.8 billion gallons (33 billion liters) of bottled water in 2007; that means 26.4 billion gallons (more than a trillion liters) were consumed making plastic in which to put that water. To make matters worse, people don't recycle plastic water bottles as much as they do soft drink bottles, probably because of differing refund laws. The Container Recycling Institute estimates that in 2005 this "wasting" or non-recycling added almost 2 million tons of PET bottles to the waste stream.

Addressing the problem of scarce water will take the energy and creativity of governments, non-profit groups and ordinary citizens. The little stream where I once spent lazy summer afternoons is gone. For me, the child who watched as a snapping turtle dragged itself out of the water to lay eggs, that spot was almost sacred. When I returned to see it 40 years later, I felt as if a dear friend had died. Yes, people want things. But that doesn't excuse irresponsible behavior with our natural resources, resources that are both life-giving and soul-filling.

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