

Coping with Global Water Scarcity

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Abstract. One of the most challenging water issues of the 21st century is scarcity. There is enough freshwater on the planet for seven billion people as well as freshwater ecosystems, but it is distributed unevenly and too much of it is wasted, polluted and unsustainably managed. Two types of water scarcity are recognized: physical water scarcity, caused by natural lack of water, and economic water scarcity, caused by economic, social, or political factors that impede fair allocation of freshwater. Factors such as population growth, increasing per capita water demand, depletion of groundwater resources, pollution, and climate change suggest that scarcity is increasing in many areas. There are many ways to enhance our supplies and make better use of what water we have, but the greatest need is for effective policy and governance pertaining to our water resources.