

Regional Freshwater Sources

Overview

Eastern Washington University's two wells draw from the Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. If you live on campus or in Cheney, this is where the water comes from when you turn on your tap. The Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie aquifer has good water levels and high flow rates, which means that water is easily extracted from it.

However, as the population in Spokane County keeps growing, along with their water usage, the aquifer is being drained faster than it's being replenished.

Along with this issue, contaminants are always a danger to our drinking water. Many contaminants are from ordinary people who don't realize the consequences of not disposing of dangerous waste properly (C. Pritchard, personal communication, February 16, 2021).



Figure 1: Washing Hands under faucet. Photo by Bermix Studio on Unsplash

Relevance to EWU Community

Why should EWU and its community care about where their water comes from? Cheney is a part of Spokane County, which is steadily growing. EWU has enough water now, but what about the upcoming generations? EWU's community should continue and grow their awareness of water conservation, so that we can do our part in ensuring our freshwater sources' future.

EWU works to aid water conservation as much as it can. One of the largest difficulties for EWU to conserve water, however, is getting students to participate and care. To help with this, EWU engages students as much as possible. The dorms compete every month for the lowest water and power usage. The facilities managers set up tables on Earth Day and Neighbor Day to engage with students (J. Butler, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

The City of Cheney also uses water conservation, particularly during the driest months of the year (City of Cheney, 2021). If you live in Cheney, then you should be aware of Cheney's Water Plan. This is called into effect when necessary. More information can be found on [Cheney's Water Conservation webpage](#).

Student Actions

Along with EWU's actions, there are small changes anyone can make to their everyday lives that, in turn, add up to less water pouring from our faucets and more in the ground. The more mindful we are of our water usage, the more water we can save for the future. Here are some tips that any college student can incorporate into their life (Crotta, 2015).

- Be aware of when you let your faucets run, and try to limit as much as possible (washing dishes, brushing teeth, shaving, etc.)
- Utilize every drop, using a container to collect extra water (rinsing vegetables, waiting for hot water, etc.) and reuse when applicable
- Only wash full loads of laundry and dishes
- Take shorter showers
- Know what Household Hazardous Materials are and how to dispose of them

These changes might take a while to fully adjust to, but once they're incorporated into your day to day life, you will save gallons of water each week. Being aware of how much water you use is an important aspect of water conservation.



Figure 2: Rinsing grapes, Photo by Manki Kim on Unsplash

If you want to learn more about saving water in your day-to-day life, see [this article](#) from Forbes Magazine. To learn more about Household Hazardous Waste and where to dispose of it, see [Spokane County's Solid Waste site](#).

EWU Resources

If you are interested in learning more about our freshwater sources, water conservation, or even sustainability, there are many resources from EWU you can turn to. The [Sustainability department](#) is a great place to start.

Jim Butler, the head water manager at EWU, is the person to talk to if you want to know more about how EWU approaches water conservation. [Here](#) is a link to Jim Butler's contact information.

If you want to incorporate water conservation and sustainability into your future, and apply it to any career path you will take, then the Sustainability Minor might be a great choice. It is only 20 credits, and can easily be incorporate into your course schedule. See the [Sustainability Minor webpage](#) for more information.

If you aren't interested in completing a whole minor, but still want to know more about water sustainability, SUST/GEOL 235 Energy/Water Nexus focuses on water sources and energy. There are no prerequisites to this class, and it fulfills a BACR Social Sciences requirement. [Click here](#) for more information.

References

City of Cheney. (2021). *Water Conservation*. <https://www.cityofcheney.org/413/Water-Conservation>

Crotta, C. (2015). 11 ways to save water at home. *Forbes Magazine*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/houzz/2015/03/31/11-ways-to-save-water-at-home/?sh=437c6a4f166c>