

Water works (except when it doesn't)

听力导读：

In many parts of the United States, water is something people **take for granted**¹: you turn on the tap, and there it is, clean and safe to drink. But the infrastructure that brings water from the ground to your **faucet**² is much more complicated in the states than it is in many other countries. It relies on thousands of chronically underfunded local utilities, which results in higher costs and more outages, especially in places like Jackson, Mississippi.

在美国的许多地方，水是人们理所当然的东西：你打开水龙头，水就干净、安全地饮用了。但在美国，将水从地面输送到水龙头的基础设施要比其他许多国家复杂得多。它依赖于数千家长期资金不足的当地公用事业，这导致了更高的成本和更多的停电，尤其是在密西西比州的杰克逊市。

Today, reporter Stephan Bisaha from the Gulf States newsroom, a collaboration of public radio stations in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, brings us to Mississippi to hear from two water industry insiders with radically different plans to fix the broken system.

今天，来自阿拉巴马州、路易斯安那州和密西西比州公共广播电台合作的海湾国家新闻编辑室的记者史蒂芬·比沙哈（Stephan Bisaha）将我们带到密西西比州，听取两位水务行业内部人士的意见，他们对修复受损系统的计划截然不同。



听力原文：

This week, more than 2 million people in Houston were without one of life's **basic necessities**³. They were without clean water. A power outage at a water treatment plant left the city under a boil-water notice on Sunday. And just this past summer, a different boil-water notice, this time in Jackson, Mississippi, left thousands of people there without safe tap water for almost seven weeks.

¹ **take for granted**: 认为理所当然：

² **faucet** ['fəʊsɪt] n. 水龙头；龙头；旋塞

³ **Basic necessities** 基本必需品

本周，休斯顿有 200 多万人没有生活必需品。他们没有干净的水。周日，一家水处理厂发生停电，导致该市面临开水通知。就在刚刚过去的这个夏天，密西西比州杰克逊市发生了一则不同的开水通知，导致数千人在将近七周的时间里没有安全的自来水。

ALEX LOUCOPOULOS: Jackson is telling us what's coming for all of us.

ALEX LOUCOPOULOS: 杰克逊在告诉我们，我们所有人都会怎样。

WOODS: This is Alex Loucopoulos. He's a water infrastructure investor. And he had this dire warning at a recent water conference at Columbia University.

伍兹：这是亚历克斯·卢科普洛斯。他是水基础设施投资者。他在哥伦比亚大学最近的一次水资源会议上收到了这个可怕的警告。

LOUCOPOULOS: We can look at Jackson, Miss., and feel bad for them or maybe make fun of them or say, that's not me. But the United States really has to wake up and say, Jackson, Miss., is the canary in the mine.

卢科普洛斯：我们可以看着杰克逊，小姐，为他们感到难过，或者取笑他们，或者说，那不是我。但美国真的必须醒过来说，杰克逊，小姐是我的金丝雀。

STEPHAN BISAHA, HOST:

主持人 STEPHAN BISAHA:

Yet the Magnolia State is more than a warning for a nation's **bleak** water future. It may also hold the secret for how to avoid it.

然而，白玉兰州不仅仅是一个国家暗淡的水资源未来的警告。它也可能隐藏着如何避免它的秘密。

WOODS: This is THE INDICATOR FROM PLANET MONEY. I'm Darian Woods.

伍兹：这是 planet money 播客。我是达里安·伍兹。

BISAHA: And I'm Stephan Bisaha from the Gulf States newsroom. We're a happy family of public radio stations in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

毕沙哈：我是来自海湾国家新闻编辑室的史蒂芬·毕沙哈。我们是阿拉巴马州、路易斯安那州和密西西比州公共广播电台的幸福家庭。

WOODS: And today on the show, two opposite approaches for dealing with water infrastructure problems in the U.S. from two Mississippi men.

伍兹：今天的节目中，两名密西西比州男子用两种相反的方法来处理美国的水基础设施问题。

BISAHA: One is using teamwork to deliver clean water in one of the poorest parts of the country.

毕沙哈：一个是利用团队合作，在该国最贫穷的地区之一提供清洁水。

WOODS: And the other is a **vigilante plumber** on a quest for water independence.

伍德斯：另一位是一位寻求水独立的义务水管工。

BISAHA: Nearly two years ago, this historic winter storm caused water pipes to freeze and burst and left millions of people without safe tap water in the South. In Jackson, Miss., the water was out for more than three weeks.

毕沙哈：近两年前，这场历史性的冬季风暴导致水管结冰和爆裂，导致南部数百万人没有安全的自来水。在密西西比州的杰克逊，水已经流出了三个多星期。

WOODS: But one water utility in the Mississippi Delta managed to keep the water pumping while some of its neighbors' pipes were dry. This was the Black Bayou Water Association.

伍兹：但密西西比河三角洲的一家供水公司设法在邻居的一些管道干涸时保持抽水。这是黑巴育水协会。

DAVID KOEHN: **Not to brag**, but Black Bayou didn't lose water pressure.

大卫·科恩：不是吹牛，但黑巴育并没有失去水压。

BISAHA: You can brag a little bit about that.

毕沙哈：你可以吹嘘一下。

KOEHN: Well...

科恩：嗯。。。

BISAHA: That's David Koehn. He's Black Bayou's general manager. I went to visit David at the time because when I called around to find someone doing something right in Mississippi with water, I was told to talk to him.

毕沙哈：那是大卫·科恩。他是黑巴育的总经理。当时我去拜访大卫，因为当我四处打电话，发现有人在密西西比州用水做正确的事情时，我被告知要和他谈谈。

WOODS: And that's a bit of a surprise because the Mississippi Delta is one of the poorest parts of the country. And this part of the Delta where David is based has a reputation for brown water.

伍兹：这有点令人惊讶，因为密西西比三角洲是美国最贫穷的地区之一。大卫所在的三角洲的这一地区以棕色水而闻名。

BISAHA: Yeah. David pulled out his phone to show me what looked like **black sludge** being extracted from the water at his new treatment plant.

毕沙哈：是的。大卫拿出手机给我看，在他的新处理厂里，从水中提取的黑色污泥看起来像什么。

KOEHN: Here, let me show you the little video.

科恩：这里，让我给你看一下小视频。

(SOUNDBITE OF WATER RUSHING)

(水流声)

BISAHA: I mean, that looks like sewage to me.

毕沙哈：我的意思是，这对我来说就像污水。

KOEHN: Yeah, well, it's actually - that's organic coloring. That's great fertilizer.

科恩：是的，事实上，这是有机色素。这是很好的肥料。

WOODS: All right, so this extract would make pretty good fertilizer, but it's not really something that I would want in my tap water.

伍兹：：好吧，所以这种提取物会成为很好的肥料，但这不是我想要的自来水。

BISAHA: Right. It's safe to leave it in there and drink, but that doesn't mean you'd want to do it. Cleaning this water required building that new treatment plant, which cost roughly \$2.5 million.

BISAHA：对。把它放在那里喝是安全的，但这并不意味着你想这样做。清洁这些水需要建造新的处理厂，耗资约 250 万美元。

How do you pay for something like that?

这样的东西你怎么付钱？

KOEHN: You've hit on the question that you come here to hear now. Profits increase with numbers.

科恩：你已经找到了你现在来这里听的问题。利润随着数字的增加而增加。

WOODS: Specifically the number of customers. And while that might not sound revolutionary on its own, it's part of this big economics concept - economies of scale. So the bigger a company or the bigger a water provider in this case - that can mean more efficiency.

伍兹：特别是客户数量。虽然这听起来并不是革命性的，但它是这个大经济学概念的一部分——规模经济。因此，在这种情况下，公司或供水商越大，意味着效率越高。

KOEHN: Well, it's much more economical. Instead of building these people a tank and these here, come right in between and build one.

科恩：嗯，这样更经济。与其在这里为这些人建造一辆坦克，不如在他们中间建造一辆。

BISAHA: Well, now you're sounding like a Wall Street CEO talking about mergers.

毕沙哈：嗯，现在你听起来像是华尔街的首席执行官在谈论合并。

KOEHN: Yeah. Well, it's what it is.

科恩：是的。嗯，就是这样。

WOODS: The flip side is that smaller utilities can be less efficient. And this problem of tiny water providers is actually a pretty big problem here in the United States. While places like the U.K. can count their water providers in the dozens, the U.S. has more than 50,000 water providers.

伍兹：另一方面，较小的公用事业可能效率较低。在美国，小型供水商的问题实际上是一个相当大的问题。虽然像英国这样的地方可以计算出几十个供水商，但美国有超过 50000 个供水商。

BISAHA: Yeah, and Black Bayou, when it started in the '90s, used to be one of those really small water providers. David had at the time just 350 customers. So to get those economies of scale, David relied on something we all learned in grade school, teamwork.

毕沙哈：是的，当 Black Bayou 在 90 年代开始时，它曾经是一个非常小的供水商。当时大卫只有 350 名顾客。因此，为了实现这些规模经济，大卫依靠我们在小学学到的东西，团队合作。

WOODS: David convinced his neighbor utilities, which were even smaller than his, that they'd all be better off if they joined forces. Everyone would come together under the Black Bayou name. And David was so convincing that he ended up with eight times as many customers. And partnering together a

bunch of these small water systems has really paid off for Black Bayou's customers. And that also includes David.

伍兹：大卫说服了比他小得多的邻居公用事业公司，如果他们联合起来，情况会更好。每个人都会以黑人巴育的名字走到一起。大卫非常有说服力，最终赢得了八倍的客户。与这些小型供水系统的合作为 Black Bayou 的客户带来了真正的回报。这也包括大卫。

(SOUNDBITE OF WATER POURING)

(倒水声)

BISAHA: For a demonstration, David turned on his kitchen faucet and filled up a glass with crystal-clear water.

毕沙哈：为了演示，大卫打开了厨房的水龙头，把一个杯子装满了晶莹剔透的水。

You drink it just like this.

你就这样喝。

KOEHN: I drink it just like that. Just like this (sipping, gulping). Yeah. Yeah, that's the way I do it.

科恩：我就是这样喝的。就像这样（啜饮，大口大口）。是 啊是的，我就是这样做的。

BISAHA: (Laughter).

毕沙哈：（笑声）。

And beyond cleaning the water, Black Bayou was able to use those savings to invest in more reliable infrastructure, which helped keep the water flowing during that winter storm two years ago.

除了清洁水，黑巴育还能够利用这些储蓄投资于更可靠的基础设施，这有助于在两年前的冬季风暴中保持水的流动。

WOODS: And the Environmental Protection Agency and lots of water advocacy groups would probably say that's not really a surprise. They have been pushing for this type of water consolidation.

伍兹：环境保护局和许多水资源倡导团体可能会说，这真的不奇怪。他们一直在推动这种类型的水资源整合。

BISAHA: Of course, we should mention some of the problems consolidation alone can't solve. A big one being that Black Bayou's water is actually more expensive than other utilities here in the Delta. Even with those economies of

scale, water is still an expensive business. And to do it right, David says, we just got to pay more.

毕沙哈：当然，我们应该提到一些单靠整合无法解决的问题。一个重要的问题是，Black Bayou 的水实际上比三角洲的其他公用设施更贵。即使有这些规模经济，水仍然是一项昂贵的业务。大卫说，要做到这一点，我们只需要付出更多。

KOEHN: You know, Mississippi needs to wake up. We have had cheap water for years and years.

科恩：你知道，密西西比需要醒来。我们多年来一直使用廉价的水。

WOODS: About a hundred miles away from David and closer to Mississippi's center, Richard White agrees that water doesn't get the attention it deserves. But he is not on the consolidation bandwagon. In fact, Richard says a water partnership isn't working for his small town. Richard is the mayor of Byram, Miss. And that's a small suburb just outside of Jackson. He's also the owner of a local auto shop, and on occasion, he is a plumber vigilante.

伍兹：距离大卫约 100 英里，距离密西西比州中心更近，理查德·怀特同意水没有得到应有的关注。但他并没有赶上整合浪潮。事实上，理查德说，水资源合作伙伴关系对他的小镇不起作用。理查德是比勒姆的市长，小姐。那是杰克逊郊外的一个小郊区。他还是当地一家汽车店的老板，有时，他还是一名水管工义务警员。

RICHARD WHITE: So this is the deal right here. This is where I came the other night. This is 110. And just take a look at it, OK?

理查德·怀特：所以这就是交易。这是我前几天晚上来的地方。这是 110。看看它，好吗？

BISAHA: Richard showed us this new brick house with a muddy mess in the front yard caused by a leak at the water meter box. Richard says it's actually illegal for him to touch the water pipes laid here. And that's because his town's merged with the city of Jackson when it comes to water infrastructure. And Jackson, it's the one in charge here. That means it owns the pipes. And it's responsible for fixing the problems.

毕沙哈：理查德向我们展示了这座新砖房，前院因水表箱漏水而脏乱不堪。理查德说，他触摸这里铺设的水管实际上是违法的。这是因为在水基础设施方面，他的城镇已与杰克逊市合并。杰克逊，是这里的负责人。这意味着它拥有管道。它负责解决问题。

WOODS: But here's the issue. Jackson's water system is still underfunded. It has problems maintaining the infrastructure just in its own city limits, let alone in Byram. Those promised economies of scale haven't been enough to

close the water budget gap. So when Richard got the call about the leak in front of this house going on for five months, he came here at 8 p.m. with his slip joint pliers. And he fixed it himself.

伍兹：但问题是这样的。杰克逊的供水系统仍然资金不足。仅在其城市范围内维护基础设施存在问题，更不用说在拜拉姆了。这些承诺的规模经济还不足以弥补水资源预算缺口。所以，当理查德接到电话，说这所房子前面的泄漏已经持续了五个月，他在晚上8点拿着滑动接头钳来到这里。他自己把它修好了。

WHITE: And somewhere along the line, I went down on my knees.

怀特：沿着这条线的某个地方，我跪了下来。

BISAHA: Covered in a lot of mud.

毕沙哈：满身是泥。

WHITE: I knew it was going to be **nasty**. But this is just not acceptable.

怀特：我知道这会很糟糕。但这是不可接受的。

BISAHA: So Richard wants out of the partnership with Jackson and for his city to have its own, independent water system. He's betting his small town can do a better job alone.

毕沙哈：所以理查德希望摆脱与杰克逊的合作关系，让他的城市拥有自己的独立供水系统。他打赌他的小镇能独自做得更好。

WHITE: We're going to have four wells and one tank.

怀特：我们将有四口井和一个水箱。

BISAHA: How much would that cost?

毕沙哈：那要多少钱？

WHITE: About 26 million.

怀特：大约2600万。

BISAHA: Pretty small town. Twenty-six million sounds like a lot of money.

毕沙哈：很小的城镇。2600万听起来是一大笔钱。

WHITE: It is. But right now there's a lot of money out there that you can use.

怀特：是的。但现在有很多钱可以用。

WOODS: And he's right. There is a lot of money out there right now. Mississippi should receive more than \$400 million for water infrastructure improvement from the federal infrastructure bill.

伍兹：他是对的。现在有很多钱。密西西比州应从联邦基础设施法案中获得超过4亿美元用于改善水基础设施。

BISAHA: Still, while Richard may have this option, as we mentioned earlier, water advocacy groups and the EPA all point toward the opposite solution - **consolidation**.

毕沙哈：尽管如此，正如我们前面提到的那样，理查德可能有这个选择，但水资源倡导团体和EPA都指向相反的解决方案——整合。

WOODS: But that requires trust. And it requires a belief in the benefits of sharing the fate of your water with somebody else. And as we can see with the U.S. and its more than 50,000 water providers, **that belief is still a tough sell**.

伍兹：但这需要信任。它需要相信与他人分享水的命运会带来好处。正如我们看到的那样，美国及其5万多家供水商仍然很难接受这一信念。