

- Water is a marvelous substance which can be beautiful, powerful and destructive.



Water is found in three states



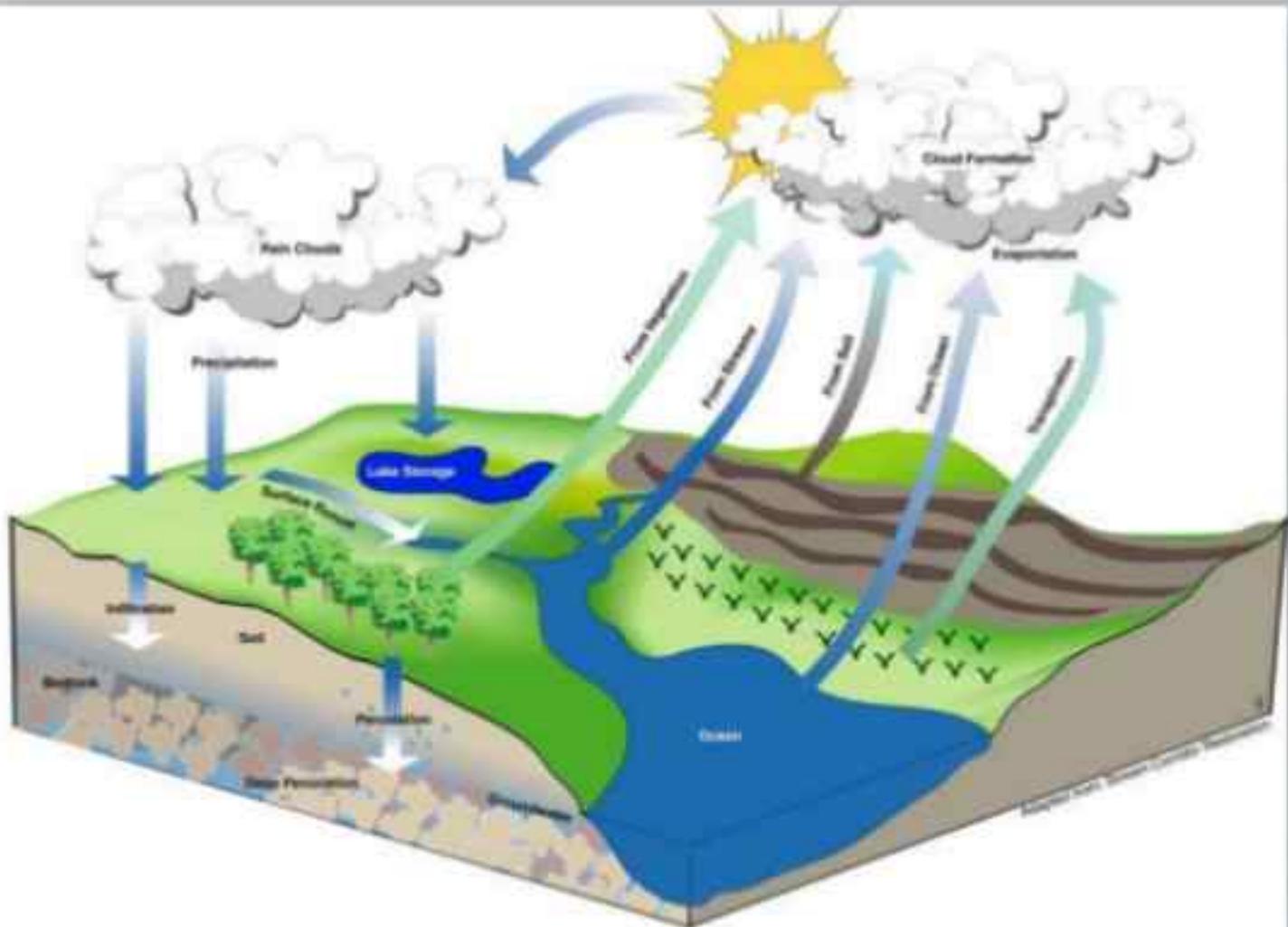
Liquid



Solid



Gas



Water resources

Water resources are sources of water that are useful or potentially useful. Uses of water include agricultural, industrial, household, recreational and environmental activities. Virtually all of these human uses require fresh water.

Water resources

97% of the water on the Earth is salt water. Only three percent is fresh water; slightly over two thirds of this is frozen in glaciers and polar ice caps. The remaining unfrozen freshwater is found mainly as groundwater, with only a small fraction present above ground or in the air.

Water resources

Fresh water is a renewable resource, yet the world's supply of clean, fresh water is steadily decreasing. Water demand already exceeds supply in many parts of the world and as the world population continues to rise, so too does the water demand.

Sources of fresh water

Surface water

Surface water is water in a river, lake or fresh water wetland. Surface water is naturally replenished by precipitation and naturally lost through discharge to the oceans, evaporation, evapotranspiration and sub-surface seepage.

Surface water

Although the only natural input to any surface water system is precipitation within its watershed, the total quantity of water in that system at any given time is also dependent on many other factors. These factors include storage capacity in lakes, wetlands and artificial reservoirs, the permeability of the soil beneath these storage bodies, the runoff characteristics of the land in the watershed, the timing of the precipitation and local evaporation rates. All of these factors also affect the proportions of water lost.

Surface water

Human activities can have a large and sometimes devastating impact on these factors. Humans often increase storage capacity by constructing reservoirs and decrease it by draining wetlands. Humans often increase runoff quantities and velocities by paving areas and channelizing stream flow.

Surface water

The total quantity of water available at any given time is an important consideration. Some human water users have an intermittent need for water. For example, many **farms** require large quantities of water in the spring, and no water at all in the winter. To supply such a farm with water, a surface water system may require a large storage capacity to collect water throughout the year and release it in a short period of time. Other users have a continuous need for water, such as a **power plant** that requires water for cooling.