

Book details ways to be smart about water use

By **Bill Keep**, Record Searchlight

In California prisons, inmates flush toilets to communicate, to warn each other, and to flood their cells in protest. Wasteful? Yes, but compared to 2,500 gallons of water to raise a pound of beef? Or snow machines eating 10,000 gallons hourly to ensure skiers' pleasure during a dry winter?

The most difficult thing about a water crisis, says Robert Glennon in "Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What to Do About It" (445 pages, Island Press, 2009) is convincing folks there's a crisis.

Besides the Colorado and the Rio Grande, almost 30 American rivers dry up before reaching their outlets. Thirty-five of the lower 48 states are engaged in water conflicts. Householders routinely haul water in Arizona, Tennessee and California, having none in their taps. Lakes Michigan and Huron have dropped 2 feet (the Great Lakes hold 95 percent of our fresh water supply). Groundwater levels have sunk 200-900 feet countrywide. Resulting subsidence affects 17,000 square miles of the U.S. – 40 feet from 1925-1970 in the San Joaquin Valley. And we drill 800,000 new unregulated wells a year.

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