

Reflections on World Water Day 2024

by Sharon B. Megdal
03/22/2024

UN WATER
22 MARCH
WORLD WATER DAY
2024 Water for Peace

Water for Peace

This Reflections essay is being published on March 22, which is World Water Day. UN-Water, which coordinates the United Nations' work on water and sanitation issues, designates a World Water Day theme each year, and this year's theme is Water for Peace. The UN-Water [webpage](#) features these points related to the Water for Peace theme, which I quote:

- Water can create peace or spark conflict.
- When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.
- More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water.
- As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.
- Public health and prosperity, food and energy systems, economic productivity and environmental integrity all rely on a well-functioning and equitably managed water cycle.
- When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges.
- We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.
- This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.

Taken together, these bullet points convey the significant global water challenges. At the same time, they focus on the importance of acting together to lay “the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.”

With the abundance of water challenges, many of which are increasing in severity, working together on solutions is crucial. Challenges such as diminishing surface water supplies, over-extraction of finite groundwater, water pollution, flooding, and insufficient water access require our collective attention. Everyone needs and uses water, so everyone has a stake in our water future. As I like to say, everyone is a water stakeholder.

Implementing water solutions through partnerships was the focus of the WRRC's 2024 Annual Conference, held on March 12-13 on the University of Arizona campus. Panelists and keynote speakers alike spoke of the need to come together to address challenging issues such as allocating a drier Colorado River, addressing groundwater overdraft, developing innovative financing options, and working across borders. We hope that our annual conference provided an opportunity for the networking and conversation that are key to developing partnerships.

Engaging in conversation and open-minded analysis of options and tradeoffs can nurture the common understanding that is the foundation for working together to identify and implement solutions. Let's build upon our relationships so that mutual respect and genuine listening carry the day. It's not easy work, but in keeping with this year's Water for Peace theme, let's cooperate rather than fight so that water security can be achieved.

