

Speech Descriptions and Potential Audiences

America's Water Crisis and What To Do About It

Audiences: Policymakers, universities, think tanks, environmental organizations, lawyers, business associations, associations of governments, civic groups

America's water crisis is self-inflicted. Throughout the United States, even in places that are not particularly dry or hot, communities, farmers, and factories are struggling to find water, and even running out altogether. Our water woes will get worse before they get better because we are slow to change our ways, and because water is the overlooked resource. From the Vegas Strip to faux snow in Atlanta, from mega-farms to Washington's love affair with biofuels, heady extravagances and everyday waste are sucking the nation dry. We cannot engineer our way out of the problem with the usual fixes or zany schemes. America must make hard choices, and Glennon's answer is a provocative market-based system that values water as a commodity and a fundamental human right.

Agriculture in a Water-Stressed World

Audiences: Farmers, farming organizations, food and beverage industry groups, food-processing associations, food movement advocates, cooking organizations

Population growth and climate change pose an immense challenge to the agricultural community: How will it feed 10+ billion people? To make matters more challenging, cities and industry want some of the water farmers currently use and some of the most productive farmland on earth is being converted for municipal and industrial uses.

Cities will need more water in the future but it should not come at the expense of the rural communities that feed us. This speech explores options for protecting rural communities *and* securing a food supply for the country. Technological developments promise another green revolution, but at a great cost. We can improve agricultural efficiency with technological improvements paid for the cities and businesses that want some of the farmers' water. A slight decrease in agricultural water consumption can dramatically increase the water available for non-farm uses.

Imagining the Water Future

Audiences: groups looking for a futurist, universities, tech companies and associations

Is the California crisis the canary in the mine? In a world of 10+ billion people, where will the water come from to grow our food, slack our thirsts, nourish our economy, and preserve our environment?

Imagine a future when technology allows cities to detect leaks in their water and wastewater pipes, thus saving trillions of gallons of water and eliminating the discharge of hundreds of millions of gallons of raw sewage into our rivers, lakes, and coastal estuaries. Imagine a future where we don't dispose of human waste with traditional toilets and where smart phone apps provide 24/7 information about our water use. Imagine a future when cities and businesses embrace "the circular economy," virtually eliminating the need for landfills.

Our water future is closer than you may think.

Our Thirst for Energy

Audiences: tech (established and start-ups), investment community, clean energy advocates, sustainability associations, energy industry trade groups

It takes water to produce energy and it takes energy to transport, cleanse, and deliver water. This symbiotic relationship drives our economy from Silicon Valley to the Farm Belt. To conserve water is to conserve energy; to conserve energy is to conserve water. Twenty percent of California's electricity is used to transport, treat and deliver water. A single 60-watt incandescent bulb that burns 12 hours a day may annually use 6,300 gallons of water to produce the electricity?

The nexus between water and energy is explored in stories about ethanol; solar energy; Google, Intel, and Facebook; and desalination of ocean water.

Water in a Changing Climate

Audiences: climate advocates, sustainability associations, business trade groups, associations of governments, foundations

A warming planet is changing precipitation patterns, wind currents, and ocean temperatures. Virtually every credible scientist has concluded that this trend is largely human caused. Climate change has profound implications for our water supplies. This presentation explores the increasing impact on stream flows, lake and reservoir levels, and examines the availability of water for farms and cities. Glennon calls for adapting to these changed conditions by building resilience into our water management institutions. He advocates borrowing principles of risk mitigation developed by hedge funds, insurance companies, and commodity markets to the world of water.

Moral Stewardship of Our Most Precious Resource: Water

Audiences: faith-based groups, civic organizations, environmentalists

A Native American proverb admonishes: “We don’t inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” We’re drinking the same water as the dinosaurs did. There is no more water available; nor will there ever be. Water is a public resource with spiritual, cultural, aesthetic, ecological, and economic value. We must be good stewards.

This talk explores the stewardship implications behind: government subsidies for profligate water use; bottled water; exporting water; unsustainable groundwater pumping; the commodification of water; and our individual “water footprints.” It argues for a human right to water and urges governments to price water sensibly to encourage water conservation.

Water and the Circular Economy

Audiences: Corporate sustainability executives, Chamber of Commerce conferences, trade groups in fields affected by water availability, such as food and beverage, high-tech, and pharmaceuticals

From Corporate Social Responsibility to Reduce-Reuse-Recycle to Triple bottom-line accounting, corporations increasingly understand that the world beyond their stakeholders and customers affects their long-term viability. An exciting new paradigm is replacing the linear “take-make-waste” model. In the “circular economy” -- a regenerative model, businesses tackle environmental problems and, simultaneously, stimulate economic growth.

This presentation examines water in the circular economy, by exploring exciting developments in water and wastewater technology, desalination, and water reuse. “Wastewater” no longer aptly describes municipal sewage, which can be used to generate heat and electricity, as fertilizer for fields, and as the source of magnesium and calcium for industrial use.

As corporations adopt circular economy principles, they can reduce waste, cut expenses, and increase their profits. The circular economy empowers companies to do well by doing good.