

Citizens Take Action

The theme for this year's celebration is "Shared Water - Shared Opportunities" with special focus on transboundary waters.

It is obvious to see how transboundary waters would affect countries whose borders are shared by neighbouring countries and especially so when those borders are obviously delineated by a fresh water source such as a river or lake. But such is not the case with us here in Jamaica.

But did you know that "Great reservoirs of freshwater also move silently below our borders in underground aquifers"¹. In other words, we are affected. Let's put this into a local perspective. According to the National Water Commission over 60% of our drinking water comes from wells. Wells are conduits carefully designed and constructed to access aquifers below the ground.

Hardly a day goes by when the words global warming aren't mentioned on local media. But really how does this global phenomenon affect persons like you and me? Well, with the threat of global warming and its increasing effects on weather patterns, such as what we have been experiencing in recent times, protracted drought followed by torrential rainfall, runoff and flooding, the threat to our drinking water is ever present. Just think of all the agricultural runoff, industrial waste and untreated sewage finding its way into our aquifers after one of those heavy rain falls.

When our neighbour pollutes the environment by improperly disposing of hazardous substances and chemicals; for example the garage next door allowing used oil to seep into the ground or old lead filled car batteries finding its way into our landfills, we are setting the stage for major problems in the not too distant future.

Jamaica we must begin to take responsibility of how we care for our environment. We must be our brother's keeper, after all what happens upstream, whatever pollutants that find themselves into our ground water affects us all.

Remember we established earlier, that great quantities of freshwater move silently below the ground flowing into our aquifers. This water ultimately will find its way to the sea and our beaches.



Everyone can play their part. We need to reconsider how we dispose of our human waste, trash, used car parts, computers, cell phones, you name it. Let's get involved, an added incentive is the fact that there's money to be made in recycling most of these hazardous human by-products.

As a certified well driller at Jamaica Wells & Services Ltd. with over 20 years experience in groundwater exploration, I have seen an increase in demand for fresh water from all groups, both industrial and agricultural. And in recent years companies are choosing salt water harvested from the sea as an alternate source to meet their needs.

I strongly believe not enough is being done to sensitize our citizens on the importance of their actions in all areas but especially how it impacts on our environment. Company's large or small and individuals can make a difference.

Currently Jamaica has some of the best quality of drinking water in the world. But how long will this continue?

Published in the Jamaican Gleaner for "World Water Day" March 2009, article written by Richard Simpson.