



# WATER IN THE WORKS

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AN ELBERT CREEK WATER COMPANY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
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# A Message from ECWC

Hello, and welcome to the Spring 2023 edition of *Water in the Works*, a quarterly newsletter published by Elbert Creek Water Company (ECWC). The purpose of this newsletter is to improve communication between ECWC customers and staff while providing customers with useful and informative articles, ideas, and updates about our distribution area.



# Please Welcome ECWC's Two Newest Team Members!



Alex Klink, Lead Operator

Hello, my name is Alex Klink! I have been a resident of Durango since 2008. I returned to work with the Elbert Creek Water Company in January 2023 as a water/wastewater operator. I graduated from Fort Lewis College in 2014 with a degree in Geology and a minor in Adventure Education. After working for years as a geologist on oil drilling rigs, I have landed as a water/wastewater operator at ECWC. I love living in the southwest and am fascinated by the geology and history in the area. In my free time I enjoy spending time outside in the wilderness. I particularly love snowboarding, rafting, mountain biking, and backpacking. I am excited to be a part of the team at ECWC and to work in such a beautiful place!



Connor Mattocks, Operator in Training

Hello, my name is Connor Mattocks. I'm excited to be joining the team here at ECWC as an Operator in Training. I grew up in western Oregon in a little town called Dallas. I was always surrounded by nature and water growing up and have always wanted to do something that involved water and giving back to the environment. I moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico in my teenage years and started learning a little about water in the Southwest where it's a much more precious resource and worked at the Bernalillo County Water Authority as an Intern for a summer. I also earned my bachelors in Earth and Planetary Science with a minor in American Studies at UNM. I recently moved to Durango after having visited many times over the years and having always loved it up here. I can't wait to get out and start exploring the area more. I'm excited to start learning more about the water industry, about how we provide the houses and golf courses in the area with water, and to start earning some certifications.

# Important ECWC Billing Information

Please see below for a few friendly reminders and extra info regarding receiving your water and wastewater service bills from Elbert Creek Water Company:

- Billing is done on a monthly basis. ECWC staff members read water meters on the last weekday of every month. Consumption and base fees are then billed on the 10<sup>th</sup> (or next weekday, if the 10<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend) of the month. For instance, in May, your water meter will be read on Wednesday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, and you will be billed for May's consumption and base fees on Monday, June 12<sup>th</sup> (because the 10<sup>th</sup> is a Saturday).
- At this time, bills are only distributed via email.** ECWC does not mail physical copies of bills through the postal service. If you would like to verify, change, or add an email address to your water billing account, please call Anna at 970-382-6787.
- A handful of our customers have experienced issues with their water bills being filtered into their email's spam folder. To avoid missing your bills and incurring late fees, we strongly encourage adding [info@elbertcreekh2o.com](mailto:info@elbertcreekh2o.com) to your email account's list of approved contacts.
- ECWC also sends out notifications about service interruptions, leaks, maintenance items, and its newsletters through [info@elbertcreekh2o.com](mailto:info@elbertcreekh2o.com). Keep an eye out for these notifications and please feel free to reply to them if you have questions or comments for ECWC staff.
- ECWC has an auto-pay option for water bills! Auto-payments are collected a week after bills are distributed. If you would like help setting up auto-payments, please call Anna at 970-382-6787. Please keep in mind that all auto-payments are assessed a 1.5% fee for the protection and encryption of your personal data.



# Water-Wise Practices for Summer



Summertime in Southwestern Colorado is beautiful, and it is also Glacier's (and ECWC's) busiest season. The majority of our residents are back on property to enjoy the golf course, hiking trails, river sports, and all the other activities Durango has to offer. One of the great components of living in this area is nature, including the extensive landscaping (both natural and man-made) around the community. Unfortunately, Durango and the Southwest are prone to extreme drought conditions. While we received record snowfall this past winter season, there is still cause for concern as snow begins to melt quickly and temperatures rise. Water conservation is a pressing issue, as is wildfire danger. ECWC promotes water conservation across its distribution system through its water rates and water-use practices, including selling reclaimed water to Glacier's golf course for irrigation, encouraging watering at night, and other practices. We encourage our customers to conserve water by planting native, drought-tolerant plants, and by irrigating on specific schedules to meet plants' needs without over- or under-watering. For more information on how you can conserve water and keep your landscaping in tiptop shape, please review ECWC's Water-Wise Landscaping presentation:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/600862ade344bd2f8788cee0/t/62604f3825bd7c642bf96964/1650478909659/Glacier+Water+Wise+Landscaping.pdf>

**Please also take a moment to review ECWC's Water Conservation Policy:**

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/600862ade344bd2f8788cee0/t/61a798d43264f8256fa11484/1638373588950/ECWC+Appendix+B+2+28+19.pdf> ; and ECWC's

**approved irrigation schedule and procedures:**

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/600862ade344bd2f8788cee0/t/61a798b9ecec2c7e4a661b32/1638373562042/ECWC+Appendix+C+2+28+19.pdf>

## 2022 Consumer Confidence Report

ECWC's 2022 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is here. To view this report containing information about the distribution system's water quality, please click the following link:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/600862ade344bd2f8788cee0/t/643424095e23ef2509afdfa6/1681138698109/2022+ECWC+CCR+Report.pdf>



# Why is America Running Out of Water?

By Jon Heggie for National Geographic, Published August 12, 2022

In March 2019, storm clouds rolled across Oklahoma; rain swept down the gutters of New York; hail pummeled northern Florida; floodwaters forced evacuations in Missouri; and a blizzard brought travel to a stop in South Dakota. Across much of America, it can be easy to assume that we have more than enough water. But that same a month, as storms battered the country, a [government-backed report](#) issued a stark warning: America is running out of water.

Within as little as 50 years, many regions of the United States could see their freshwater supply reduced by as much as a third, [warn scientists](#). Of all the freshwater basins that channel rain and snow into the rivers from which we draw the water we rely on for everything from drinking and cooking to washing and cleaning, nearly half may be unable to meet consumers' monthly demands by 2071. This will mean serious water shortages for Americans.

Shortages won't affect only the regions we'd expect to be dry: with [as many as 96 out of 204 basins in trouble](#), water shortages would impact most of the U.S., including the central and southern Great Plains, the Southwest, and central Rocky Mountain states, as well as parts of California, the South, and the Midwest. And if 50 years seems like a long way off, the reality is much sooner: shortages could occur in 83 basins as early as 2021. With 40 out of 50 states expecting water shortages, it's time to start thinking about where our water is going.

From the snow-capped Rockies to the flat expanses of the prairies, and from the wetlands of Florida to the deserts of Arizona, the U.S. is a country of geographical extremes with rainfall patterns to match: Louisiana gets over 60 inches of rainfall a year, while in Nevada, less than 10 inches of rain falls annually in valleys and deserts. But climate change is impacting precipitation. In broad terms, while the wettest regions of the U.S. are getting wetter, the drier areas are getting drier, and there are some seasonal shifts in water patterns—rising temperatures mean the snowmelt that feeds many rivers begins and ends earlier, contributing to summer water shortages. Even where precipitation is projected to increase, mostly in the nation's northern regions, the trend is toward more intense concentrations of rainfall that are difficult to capture and use. At the same time, 145 basins are expected to be drier, especially in the Southwest, southern Great Plains, and Florida. In the West, California has already faced [some of its worst droughts in recorded history](#).

Along with decreasing rainfall comes rising temperatures. By 2050 the U.S. could be as much as 5.7°F warmer, and extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and drought, could be more intense and occur more frequently. As temperatures warm, evaporation increases, further decreasing water in lakes, reservoirs, and rivers. For example, every degree of warming in the Salt Lake City region could drop the annual water flow of surrounding streams by as much as 6.5 percent—for cities in the western U.S. that rely on cool temperatures to generate snow and rain, [warmer weather is bad news](#).

As the U.S. water supply decreases, demand is set to increase. On average, each American uses 80 to 100 gallons of water every day, with the nation's [estimated total daily usage topping 345 billion gallons](#)—enough to sink the state of Rhode Island under a foot of water. By 2100 the U.S. population will have increased by nearly 200 million, with a total population of some 514 million people. Given that we use water for everything, the simple math is that more people mean more water stress across the country.

And we are already tapping into our reserves. Aquifers, [porous rocks and sediment that store vast volumes of water underground](#), are being drained. Nearly 165 million Americans rely on groundwater for drinking water, farmers use it for irrigation—37 percent of our total water usage is for agriculture—and industry needs it for manufacturing. Groundwater is being pumped faster than it can be naturally replenished. The Central Valley Aquifer in California underlies one of the nation's most agriculturally productive regions, but it is in drastic decline and has lost about ten cubic miles of water in just four years.

Decreasing supply and increasing demand are creating a perfect water storm, the effects of which are already being felt. The Colorado River carved its way 1,450 miles from the Rockies to the Gulf of California for millions of years, but now no longer reaches the sea. In 2018, parts of the Rio Grande recorded their lowest water levels ever; Arizona essentially lives under permanent drought conditions; and in South Florida's freshwater aquifers are [increasingly susceptible to salt water intrusion due to over-extraction](#).

With a potential disaster looming, there are doubts about the effectiveness and environmental impacts of traditional responses, including [expanding reservoirs and mining more aquifers](#). New solutions are needed. Desalination plants can produce as much as 50 million gallons of freshwater a day—California has 11 desalination plants, and another 10 are being planned. But despite costs that are half of what they once were, desalinated water is still about twice as expensive as extracted freshwater. Water transfers from wet to dry regions, such as from the Colorado River basin to California, are another expensive option already in use. Proposals have periodically forwarded to pipe water south from Alaska and Canada, but costs and complexity have prevented any further planning or development.

Perhaps the simplest solution is to use less water. Los Angeles has grown by a million people since the 1970s, but water usage is still the same. Water meters and careful pricing help discourage waste, while fixing aging infrastructure will keep more water in the system—a water mains break in the U.S. approximately every two minutes. In the agriculture sector, reducing irrigation by as little as two percent could avert shortages in one-third of the affected basins; farmers could save water by using drip irrigation, soil moisture sensors, and planting more drought-resistant crops. And every American can save more water at home in multiple ways, from taking shorter showers to not rinsing dishes under a running faucet before loading them into a dishwasher, a practice that wastes around 20 gallons of water for each load. These are such small actions, but taken by many, they could amount to the biggest water savings—and we're going to need every drop.

Direct link to article may be found here: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/partner-content-americas-looming-water-crisis>