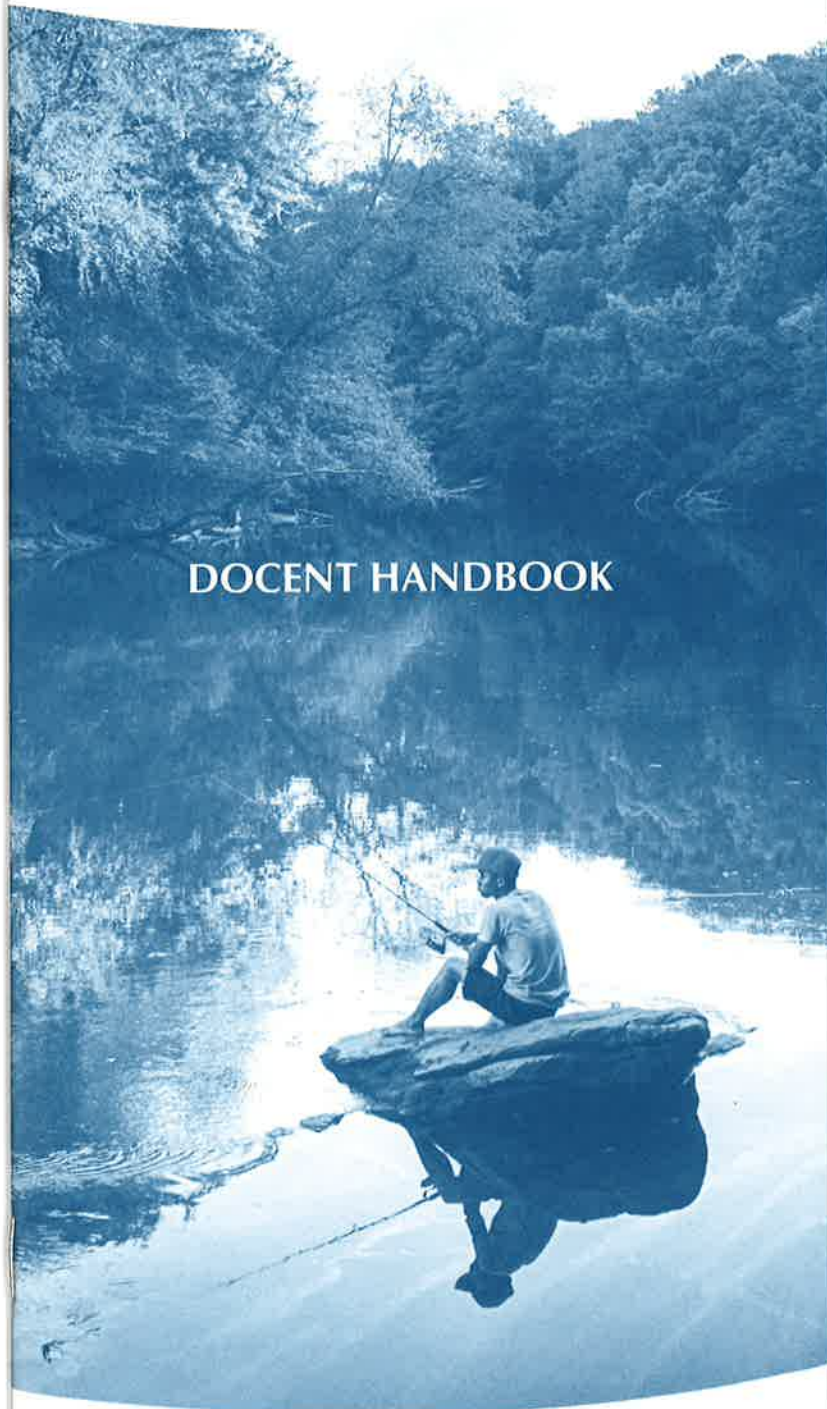


WATER | WAYS



DOCENT HANDBOOK

Museum on Main Street

A partnership of the Smithsonian Institution
and State Humanities Councils nationwide
in service to America.



Smithsonian

Museum on Main Street (MoMS) is a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide that serves small-town museums and their patrons. This innovative project provides one-of-a-kind access to Smithsonian exhibitions and educational humanities programs. Most importantly, MoMS provides community museums and libraries an opportunity to showcase their strengths and reinforce their meaningful contributions to small-town life. Like all MoMS exhibitions, **Water/Ways** was specifically designed to meet the needs of small organizations.

Visit the exhibition website at www.MuseumonMainStreet.org/water.

For information about other Museum on Main Street exhibitions, visit www.MuseumonMainStreet.org.

Water/Ways is a Museum on Main Street exhibition developed by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, funded by the U.S. Congress, and brought to you by your state humanities council.

Water/Ways was inspired by an exhibition organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (www.amnh.org), and the Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul (www.smm.org), in collaboration with Great Lakes Science Center, Cleveland; The Field Museum, Chicago; Instituto Sangari, Sao Paulo, Brazil; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; San Diego Natural History Museum; and Science Centre Singapore with PUB Singapore

COVER: Fishing on Georgia's Chattahoochee River; photo by Steve Harwood

BELOW: Michael Dawes

Welcome



Welcome! This docent handbook will assist you in helping visitors appreciate and enjoy **Water/Ways**. The guide leads you through the exhibition—section-by-section—and offers ideas, themes, and questions designed to inspire meaningful discussion during your tours. Your job is to encourage visitors to think about the subject matter and invite them to share memories and personal connections to the exhibit.

Water/Ways consists of five content sections. This handbook follows the same format. An overview text providing a synopsis of major concepts for each section's themes is followed by four types of questions: "**Think About It**," "**Let's Talk**," "**Let's Watch**" and "**Get Interactive**."

"Think About It" highlights points for conversation and reflection. "Let's Talk" offers questions to ask visitors. Most are open-ended; the answers to others can be found in the exhibition text. "Let's Watch" and "Get Interactive" ask visitors to view a video or engage with an exhibition component. **Water/Ways** features two digital kiosks—"The Power of Water" and "Our Relationship with Water"—with short videos and image collections. Encourage your visitors to sample the stories available on each kiosk.

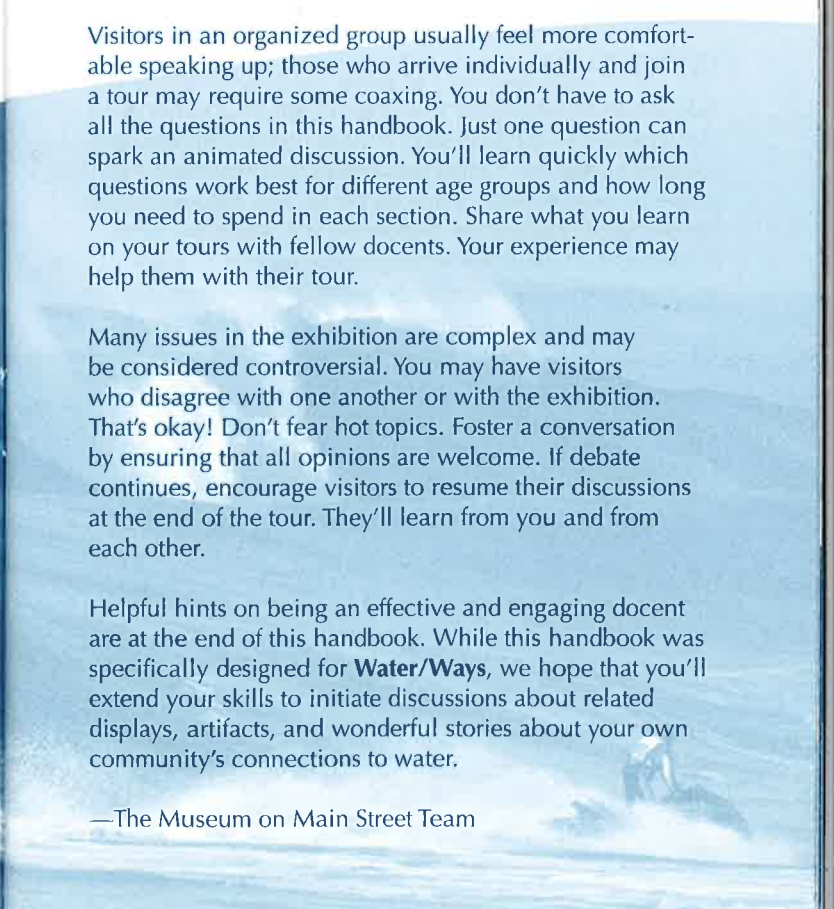
Review this handbook and the exhibition script, available online at www.museumonmainstreet.org, to become familiar with the exhibition. Remember, a docent is not expected to be an expert. You're here to initiate and lead a discussion.

Visitors in an organized group usually feel more comfortable speaking up; those who arrive individually and join a tour may require some coaxing. You don't have to ask all the questions in this handbook. Just one question can spark an animated discussion. You'll learn quickly which questions work best for different age groups and how long you need to spend in each section. Share what you learn on your tours with fellow docents. Your experience may help them with their tour.

Many issues in the exhibition are complex and may be considered controversial. You may have visitors who disagree with one another or with the exhibition. That's okay! Don't fear hot topics. Foster a conversation by ensuring that all opinions are welcome. If debate continues, encourage visitors to resume their discussions at the end of the tour. They'll learn from you and from each other.

Helpful hints on being an effective and engaging docent are at the end of this handbook. While this handbook was specifically designed for **Water/Ways**, we hope that you'll extend your skills to initiate discussions about related displays, artifacts, and wonderful stories about your own community's connections to water.

—The Museum on Main Street Team



INTRODUCTION

Water is Life



Water is life. It forms our world and our lives. It allows us to travel; it blocks our paths. It is crucial in determining where we live and work and what we eat and drink. It is an essential biological and natural resource that people struggle to access and control.

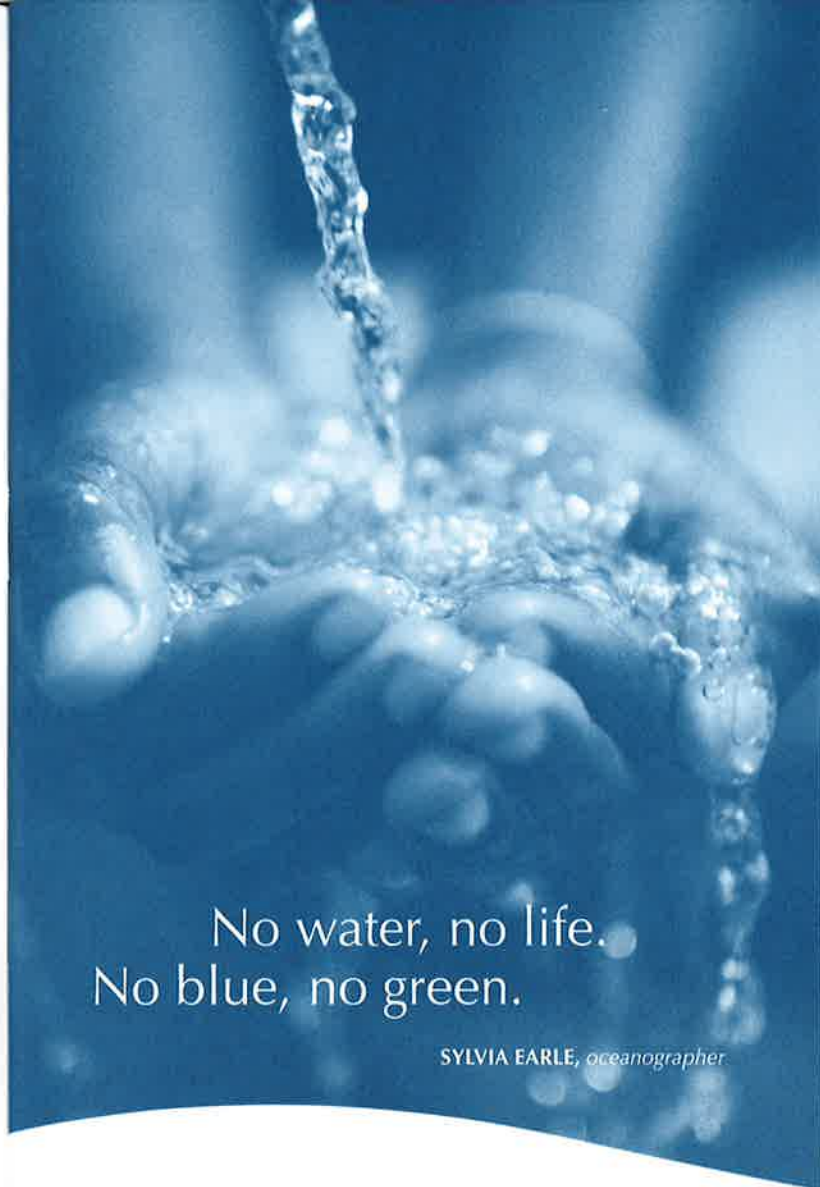
Water shapes human culture—our ways of life. It is central to many rituals and ceremonies around the world. It inspires art and music.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think this exhibition is titled **Water/Ways**? What are the ways of humanity in relation to water? Ask visitors to think about all of the ways they connect to water—physically, biologically, and emotionally. What does water mean to individuals or communities? Water may have a role to play in someone's work, someone's faith, or someone's relationship with nature. Ask visitors to think about their own water story. Encourage visitors to begin composing that story as they walk through the exhibition and to build upon the story as they explore each section.

LET'S WATCH

Ask visitors to look at the row of small images in front of the wave and watch the video of water in different settings. Ask visitors to name additional settings and events in their lives that involve water. What do the photos, the video, and the settings mentioned by visitors tell you about the variety of situations in which we interact with water?



No water, no life.
No blue, no green.

SYLVIA EARLE, *oceanographer*

LET'S TALK

Ask visitors to read the quote by oceanographer Sylvia Earle. What does Earle's statement indicate about her view of the importance of water to people and the planet? Do you agree with Earle's statement that no water means that there's no life?

Do you stop to think about your water each day? Many people may not realize how deeply emotional their relationships with water are. If you were asked to select a water spot that is meaningful to you, what or where would it be? Why is that place special to you?



ABOVE: Photo courtesy US Agency for International Development

LEFT: Irrigated landscape near Ririe Dam, ID; photo by Sam Beebe

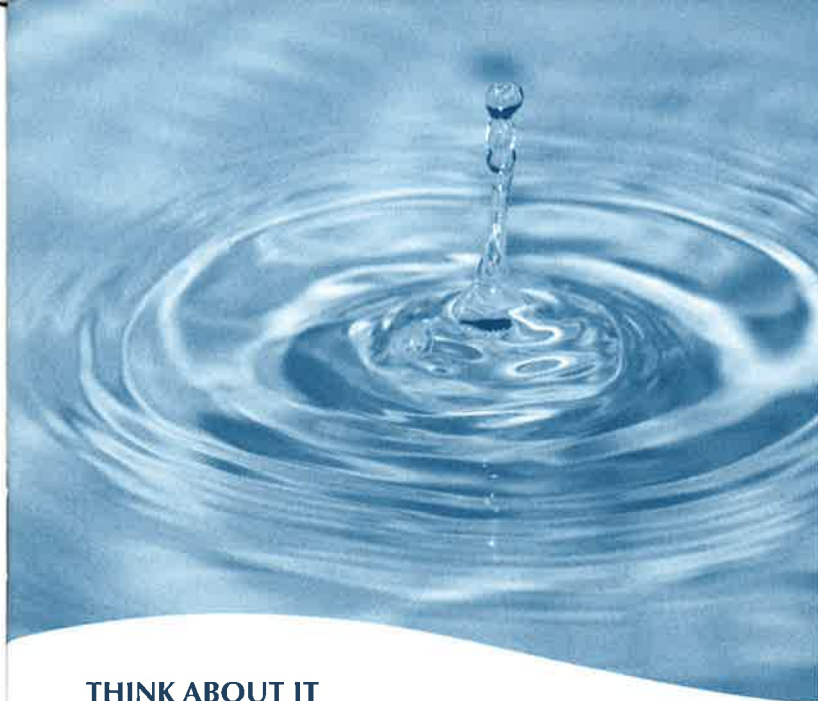
INTRODUCTION

Water is Intriguing!



Just as we are made of water, so is our world. There's water in the clouds above and there's water hidden below the soil. The movement of moisture through our atmosphere helps determine our weather. Water—so common, yet so unique—defines our planet.

Water is among the most plentiful substances on Earth's surface. From oceans, rivers, and lakes to the rain, snow, and hail that fall each day, Earth holds a nearly unimaginable amount of liquid water. Yet freshwater, the water we need to live, makes up only three percent of the world's water, and much of it is inaccessible.



THINK ABOUT IT

Earth holds 327 quintillion (*that's 327 plus 18 zeros—327,000,000,000,000,000,000*) gallons of water. That surely seems like more than enough for everyone, so why then is water so precious? [*Only 3% of the world's water is freshwater and an even smaller percentage of that is accessible.*] Ask visitors to look through the "Where is Our Water" flipbook and review the graphics about the sources of our water. What is the source of your drinking water? What do you think of the fact that we actually rely on a fairly small percentage of Earth's water?

GET INTERACTIVE/LET'S WATCH

How much of the human body is water? [*Right around 60%. Ask a visitor to touch the button by the water droplet to reveal the answer.*] How much of the planet is covered by water? [*About 71%, mainly in the world's oceans*] Where are all of the different places that we find water? [*clouds, steam, wells, ice, and more*]

Water is an intriguing substance. Show a couple of the "Cool Facts" videos from the "Power of Water" kiosk to help visitors learn more about the uniqueness of water and the different animals and ecosystems that water supports. What are the three different physical states of water? [*solid, liquid and gas/vapor*] How do people and animals use water in each of those different forms each day? What do you find most interesting about water?

LET'S TALK

It has been said that we are still drinking the water used by the dinosaurs. And, it's true. Our water is in a continual state of recycling. How does Earth's water cycle work?

Water's movement and interaction with energy in the atmosphere is one of the primary drivers of our weather. Describe your most memorable encounter with rain, thunderstorms, snow or ice.

ABOVE: Pakhnyushchy/Shutterstock.com

LEFT: NASA/NOAA/GSFC/Suomi NPP/VIIRS/Norman Kuring



What's a Watershed?

The old adage that someone, somewhere, is always downstream from you is actually true. Everyone lives within a watershed—the surrounding area of land in which water collects and, ultimately, drains into a water source. Watersheds cross property lines and political boundaries all the time, sometimes causing conflicts for neighboring jurisdictions.

THINK ABOUT IT

Define the term watershed and encourage visitors to touch the relief map of the Elwha River watershed. What natural feature on the map determines the shape and size of watersheds? [*Terrain—hills and mountains—form the boundaries for water basins.*] What watersheds drain your community? Where does your community's surface water originate? Where does that water finally end its journey?

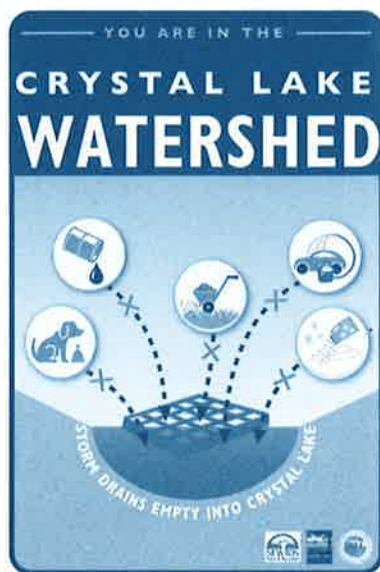
LET'S WATCH

On the "Our Relationship with Water" kiosk, watch the video "John Wesley Powell sees the future of water in the West" under the "Sharing the Colorado River" icon. Geologist Powell called watersheds "that area of land ... within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course." Why do you think that Powell thought that watersheds were so important? [*He believed that watersheds were a shared interest and that governments, residents and new settlers should work together to manage resources properly.*] What do you think of Powell's position?

Show visitors the text screen and a couple of the videos under the "Mississippi River Neighbors" icon on the "Our Relationship with Water" kiosk. The Mississippi River basin is enormous, stretching from Idaho to New York and draining more than 40% of the 48 contiguous states. In what ways are people living in the Mississippi basin neighbors? Why do you think it is important to know where your watershed is and where your water ends its journey?

LET'S TALK

We've all heard the old adage that all water flows inevitably into the sea. But, that's not true! Not all water flows into the sea. Some watersheds have no outlet because they are in areas where mountains and other landforms provide no way to reach a lower elevation. These basins are called **endorheic** watersheds. What do you think happens to water that has no way to continue flowing? Where does it end up? [*Water may evaporate or be drawn slowly into groundwater.*]



THIS PAGE: Yosemite National Park, CA; Vlue/Shutterstock.com

INSET: Courtesy of the Crystal Lake Conservancy, Newton, Massachusetts, Design/Concept: Fassino/Design



LET'S WATCH

Play the introductory video for the “Power of Water” kiosk. Where do you see the power of water on a daily basis? What are all of the ways that water shapes your life?

Watch some of the slideshows and videos in the creativity section. [In particular, view the “Wild Rio Grande” and Alvin Ailey dance performance videos]. Talk with visitors about the connections between water and creativity. Why do you think that water is symbolic in literature, music and dance? In what ways did water inspire the artists in these videos? What is your favorite book, song or artwork featuring water? Why does it appeal to you? Does water inspire you? What does water make you think about?

LET'S TALK

Ask visitors to describe how water helped create the landscape around your community. What natural features in your area were formed or shaped by water's flow or retreat? How are those landmarks important to your local culture?

Invite visitors to review the “Spirituality and Water” flipbook to see stories about the meaning of water in several different faiths and cultures. What are some of the similarities you identified between the symbolism of water and its use in ceremonies in different faiths? What are some of the most significant differences? Describe how a religious or spiritual ceremony involving water is meaningful to you.

GET INTERACTIVE

Ask visitors to turn the “Ripple Effect” dial to see three stories of communities displaced by flooding. Water makes our lands rich and bountiful, but sometimes it chases us away. Tell us about a time when you had too much water. How did that experience affect you?



SOURCE

Land and Humanity

Water is the source of our very lives. It is at the source of the things we encounter every day. It shapes our land, forms our communities, and inspires our culture.

Rivers, rain, ice, and oceans shape the land through erosion and constant pressure on the earth. The ebb and flow of water creates and destroys the land we inhabit. Access to water determines where, and how, we build our communities and structure our lives. Water holds a central place in the origin stories and rituals of many cultures and faiths. Water inspires our art, music, dance, and literature.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the exhibition curators say that “Water is the source of our very lives?” Consider all of the ways that water is at the core of things: it's not only in our bodies and all around us on the planet, but it's also featured in our faiths and our culture. In many cultures, water is the substance at the heart of Earth's origins. What would happen—in physical and cultural terms—without water? In what ways do you think that water is one of the planet's most critical building blocks?



SOURCE

Settlement and Access

The availability of fresh water is a basic need for communities. In the past, people settled in places with adequate water. Today, tens of millions of Americans continue to make their homes along the water's edge. We identify our communities with names like Eastern Shore or Bay Area, making the water a natural marker and cultural touchstone of the places where we live and work.

Water is a shared resource. It flows between communities; the water used upstream is also used downstream. But it is not always shared equally. Water's usefulness—and our unquestionable need for it—makes it a valuable commodity. Disputes over access and availability of water happen regularly, throughout the world, our country included.

THINK ABOUT IT

Our cultural, economic, and political relationships with water are very complex. Point out to your visitors the stories of the Georgia-Alabama-Florida "water war" over the Chattahoochee River and of the serious contamination of drinking water supplies in Flint, Michigan. Disputes and disasters over water often lead to difficult questions for communities to answer. Who should hold power over water? Who is responsible for water availability and quality? How can communities decide whose interests are most important? What do you think? Is access to clean water a human right that should be managed through regulations and public policies? Or, is water a commodity to be purchased? How can people solve these disagreements? *[There are no right or wrong answers!]*

LET'S WATCH

View some of the slideshows in the Community section of the "Our Relationship with Water" kiosk. Are there communities in your area that have suffered from water contamination, like Reveilletown, Louisiana? What happened in those communities?

LET'S TALK

Did water play a role in the settlement of your hometown? In what ways does water continue to impact the decisions people make to live in your area? Do you think that Americans take water for granted more today than in the past?

What significance does water have in the identity of your community? In what ways does your community's relationship with water make your local culture unique? Is your area located on an island? Is it known as a resort area because of local lakes or beaches? Does your area take its name from a waterway? Or, is the culture of your community built around its lack of water?

What is the most significant dispute over access to water that has occurred in your area? How was the dispute resolved?

Was there a time when your access to water was blocked. How did that experience affect you?



TOP LEFT: Flint MI, water distribution; Michigan National Guard
ACROSS SPREAD: Harpers Ferry, WV; markvandykephotography/
Shutterstock.com



Connections and Divisions



Water not only has three physical states—it also possesses multiple traits that often seem contradictory. Water sustains us. It can also harm us. Water is sometimes soft and gentle, but at other times, water rages and pushes large obstacles aside with ease. The flow of water both connects and divides people.

Water is a core factor in our relationships with the world around us. Historically, access to water made it easier to travel, migrate, or trade with others. Water was the fastest pathway to other places. Today, waterways still serve as highways, moving people, cargo, and ideas.

Water is a natural border, and it makes a logical political boundary. It can also be significant as a cultural or symbolic border. For those traveling by land, water can be a barrier.

ABOVE: Cuban migrants arrive in Key West, FL, 1980; US Coast Guard

RIGHT, TOP: Gordon/Shutterstock.com

RIGHT, BOTTOM: Americans and Mexicans join hands across the Rio Grande; Lorne Matalon

Nothing is softer or
more flexible than water,
yet nothing can resist it.

LAO TZU, Chinese philosopher and poet

THINK ABOUT IT

Ask a visitor to read the quote from Lao Tzu. What do you think Lao Tzu means? How can water be flexible and rigid at the same time? What are other ways that water has contradictory traits? [possible answers include: life-giving/deadly force, connector/divider, soft/strong]

Water has historically been both a pathway to freedom for people looking for a new life and a voyage to enslavement and deprivation for people removed from their homes. How did this dual role of water play a role in your community's physical and cultural development? What role did water play in your own family's migration stories?

LET'S TALK

What are the ways that water forms connections and divisions in your community?

For centuries, water helped bring people from a variety of cultures to places all over the world. Islands, in particular, have served as cultural crossroads, bringing people with different backgrounds together and forming unique communities. Is your community located on or near an island? In what ways is its culture and environment unique?

What boundaries in your area are formed by water? Are those boundaries both political and cultural?



QUENCH

Using Water at Home

You've probably had a glass of water to drink today, taken a shower, or washed some dishes. We use water in our homes every day. For most Americans, water is so easy to get and use that we don't even think about it.



ABOVE: Benjamin Smith, www.benjaminasmith.com

RIGHT: Courtesy of California Department of Water Resources, Photograph by John Chacon



THINK ABOUT IT/LET'S TALK

Ask each visitor to share what she or he considers to be the thing that consumes the most water in their own homes. About how much water does each visitor think she or he uses each day? Share some of these statistics about the home use of water in American households with visitors:

- The average American uses about 80-100 gallons of water each day, mostly for health and hygiene
- Newer water-saving showerheads use about 2 gallons of water per minute, while older fixtures can use up to 5 gallons per minute
- The average bath requires about 36 gallons of water
- Older toilets use up to 5 gallons of water in a single flush. Today, federal standards allow only 1.6 gallons per flush. The average toilet is flushed five times each day
- Up to 14% of the water used in an average home is lost in leaks

How does your use measure up? What steps do people in your community take to conserve or reuse residential water? *[Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Visitors may have different opinions about these questions.]*

GET INTERACTIVE

View the "How Much Water" interactive by lifting the windows to see how much water is needed to make common products. Which of the amounts surprised you most? Compare the 1,800 gallons of water used to produce a pound of beef and 2,000 gallons of water used to make a pair of jeans to the 39,000 gallons of water required to make a car and four tires. Why do you think that it takes more water to produce 22 pounds of beef or 20 pairs of jeans than it does to make a car? Where do you think that most of the water needed for the beef and jeans is consumed? *[In agriculture—sustaining the cattle and growing cotton]*



QUENCH

Harnessing Water's Power

Humans not only drink water—we put it to work.

We search for ways to control water and the energy it possesses. In 2010, Americans withdrew 355 billion gallons of water for use each day. Massive dams corral our drinking water and generate electricity. Miles upon miles of canals and irrigation deliver water to crops. We use water to make goods like paper and computer chips, to keep lawns green, and for cooking and cleaning.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is the biggest use of water in the United States—power generation or agriculture? [In 2010, the US Geological Survey reported that 41% of the public freshwater supply in the US was used for creating energy. Agriculture accounted for 38%.] What do you think are the biggest uses for water in your area?

LET'S WATCH/GET INTERACTIVE

Ask visitors to look at some of the jobs connected to water in the "Water and Work" flipbook. What other jobs are connected to water in your area? In what ways have those jobs developed unique cultural attributes? Are the people who perform that work closely-knit? Does your community derive its identity from that water-based work? How is that work celebrated or recognized?

Watch the video on the culture of crabbing in Louisiana. What do you think of Nicholas Alfonso's desire to pass the culture of his work and the joy of being out on the water to other members of his family? Do you work on the water or do you know someone who does? How does that work impact your family?

The decisions that we make about controlling water are very complex and require cooperation from many different communities and groups. Watch some of the videos in the "Our Relationship with Water" kiosk about how different groups work to manage the Colorado River. How are important rivers in your area managed? Are there disputes over the decisions that are made?

LET'S TALK

How does water support the economy in your community? What would happen to your local economy if water became scarce?

Point out the large photograph of Theodore Roosevelt Dam in Arizona. What are some of the positive benefits from dams? [possible answers include: flood control, irrigation, drinking water, hydroelectric power and reservoirs that open up recreational opportunities and economic benefits] What are some of the reasons people see dams as negative? [reservoirs may cover towns and force people to relocate, block free flow of rivers and streams, and may block migration of fish and other aquatic life] What has been the impact of dams built in your area?



LEFT: Salmon fishing, Alaska; NOAA

ABOVE: Irrigation equipment; muratar/Shutterstock.com



QUENCH



Finding Comfort and Purpose in Water

The scent of a rain shower. The sound of rain on a rooftop. A cool swim on a hot day. Majestic waves crashing on the shore. Water appeals to all our senses. We carry in our heads and our hearts notions about what our water means to us.

Our relationship with water is both personal and communal. We look to water to provide peace and solitude in the midst of our hectic daily lives. We see natural beauty along riverbanks and we pause to admire sunrise and sunset at the water's edge. Water also has a way of bringing us together. We gather at the shore of the ocean, a lake, or a river to swim, fish, kayak, or boat.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is your favorite water spot (lake, stream, river, sea, etc.)? Why is that water special to you? What role does that place play in your personal water story?

LET'S TALK

What is your favorite cultural tradition or festival connected to water? Is it related to your cultural background, your faith, your work, your community, or just pure fun? How does your community celebrate water?

Tell us about your most memorable experience traveling on a ship, boat, or other watercraft.

Ask visitors to take a look at the objects and photos in the object case. What was the best water vacation you ever had? What gear did you take with you? What mementos and souvenirs did you bring home? What made the trip special to you?

Describe your favorite thing to do at the water's edge. Tell us about a time when water made you happy. Which of your senses are triggered when you think of water?

Tell us your favorite food related to water. What makes that dish memorable to you?

LEFT: Fisherman at Virginia Beach, VA; Photo by Captain Albert E. Theberge, NOAA Corps, ret.



WATER IS ETERNAL?

Water's Challenges

Water is a finite resource. Our environment does not create water—it recycles it.

We take steps to ensure the quality and reliability of our current water sources. We find ways to recycle water and make untapped water sources useful. Even though we have the recipe—two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen—we cannot safely make our own water.

Population growth is altering access to water supplies.

Scientists continue to study how climate changes could affect water supplies in the future. Americans are making great strides in cleaning up water supplies, but pollution remains a problem.

BELOW: Runoff on a California beach, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA

OPPOSITE PAGE: Drought-stricken lake, CA; Sheila Fitzgerald/Shutterstock.com



THINK ABOUT IT

Think beyond your faucet: Ask visitors to view the map showing 40 states that anticipate facing water shortages by 2024. Is your state among them? Are there any issues that could impact your access to water? What are the threats facing your water (and, possibly, your water/ways)? Tell us what concerns you most about the water in your community. How might those problems also affect your area culturally and economically?

GET INTERACTIVE

Demonstrate the WaterSim America interactive game to visitors. The simulation places users in 2065 and asks them to maximize water efficiency by allowing them to adjust different variables. Are you surprised at how difficult it is to get all of the factors into positive territory? Why do you think that managing water for people, the environment and the economy is so complex?

LET'S TALK

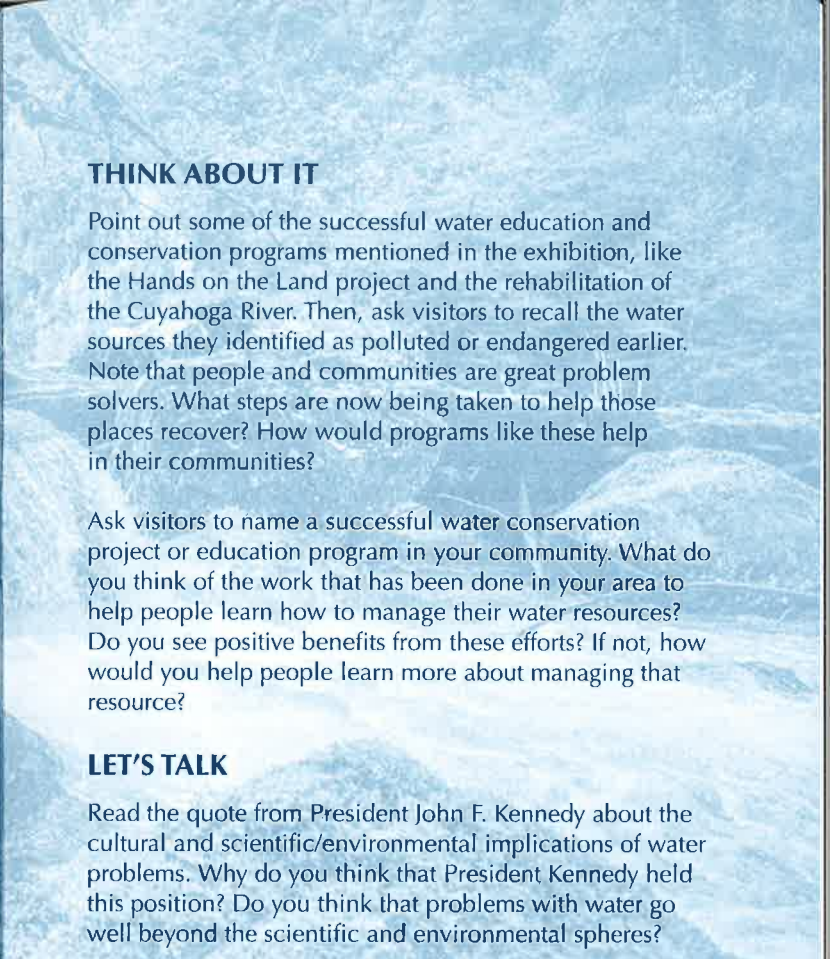
Ask a visitor to read the quote from oceanographer Jacques Cousteau. What do you think of Cousteau's position on the impact of pollution on water?

Point out the photographs showing the retreat of Alaska's Muir Glacier and show visitors a few of the photographs in the "Before and After" flipbook. What are some of the factors that created negative changes in these environments? What are some of the efforts underway to reverse those changes? Name some water sources in your community that have experienced impacts from drought, pollution, or other factors.

Tell us about a time when you had too little water. What happened? How did that experience affect you?

Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans.

JACQUES COUSTEAU



WATER IS ETERNAL?

It's Our Water

Americans have learned over the past century that our access to clean, usable water is far from guaranteed. No new water is being created—we have to protect the water we have and use it wisely.

While some water challenges are seemingly insurmountable, people are great problem solvers. There are many easy, positive changes we can make right where we live. It is possible—and necessary—to renew, refresh, and reuse water.

Our history and our culture bear witness to the importance of water. Just as water nourishes us physically, it also builds us up spiritually. Without enough water, our health suffers and our economy and political structures would falter. It's clear that water has a significant impact on our ways of life.

ABOVE: everst/Shutterstock.com

RIGHT: US EPA

THINK ABOUT IT

Point out some of the successful water education and conservation programs mentioned in the exhibition, like the Hands on the Land project and the rehabilitation of the Cuyahoga River. Then, ask visitors to recall the water sources they identified as polluted or endangered earlier. Note that people and communities are great problem solvers. What steps are now being taken to help those places recover? How would programs like these help in their communities?

Ask visitors to name a successful water conservation project or education program in your community. What do you think of the work that has been done in your area to help people learn how to manage their water resources? Do you see positive benefits from these efforts? If not, how would you help people learn more about managing that resource?

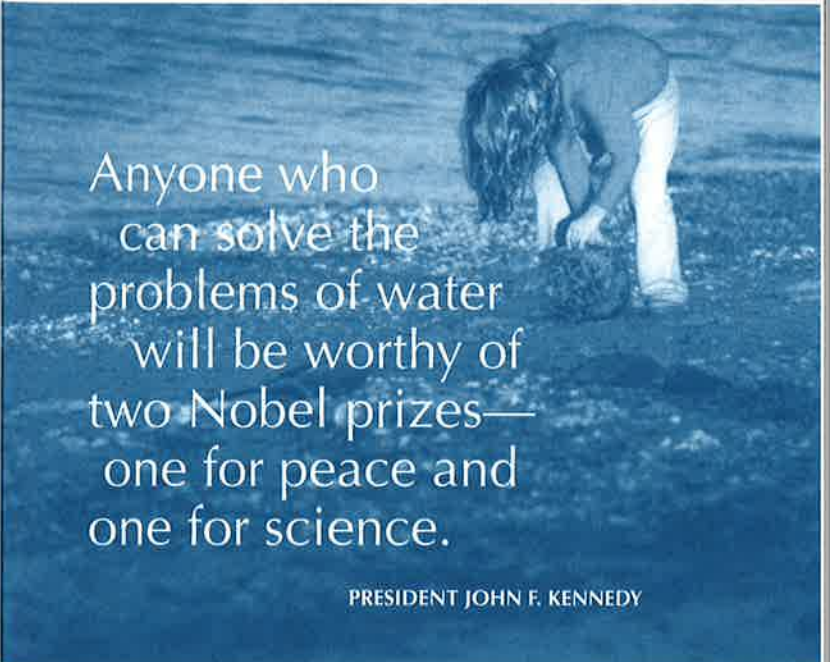
LET'S TALK

Read the quote from President John F. Kennedy about the cultural and scientific/environmental implications of water problems. Why do you think that President Kennedy held this position? Do you think that problems with water go well beyond the scientific and environmental spheres?

What do you think is the most important thing people should appreciate or learn about water? What do you think is the future of our relationships with water?

GET INTERACTIVE

Remind visitors to share their personal water stories by visiting the Museum on Main Street website or using the social media hashtags #mywaterstory or #thinkwater.



Anyone who
can solve the
problems of water
will be worthy of
two Nobel prizes—
one for peace and
one for science.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY



Tell #mywaterstory on Stories from Main Street!

Scattered throughout **Water/Ways**, you will find two hashtags, #mywaterstory and #thinkwater that encourage visitors to share and follow conversations about water. Docents, visitors, and other community members are welcomed to visit the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street website to upload their personal water stories they recalled as they visited the exhibition, or they can simply share their story on social media with the #mywaterstory tag.

This is a free opportunity for you and your visitors to participate in an exciting initiative called Stories from Main Street, a Smithsonian repository for stories from rural America. Our website at www.MuseumonMainStreet.org provides a place where the Smithsonian, state humanities councils, host organizations, and the general public are working together to create a permanent home for important stories, images, oral histories, and videos that document life in small and rural communities.

WHAT KINDS OF STORIES DOES THE INITIATIVE COLLECT?

We're interested in more than your visitors' water stories. If it happened in small-town America, we want to hear about it. Visitors can also add stories in other categories like:

- Favorite food traditions
- Experiences living in a small town
- Stories about jobs
- Travel and immigration
- Local music traditions
- Sports in your town
- Family life
- Military life

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?

The Smithsonian will save and review the stories contributed to the website. And, great stories will be regularly featured on the website, in featured articles, on social media, and in future exhibitions.

HOW CAN MY COMMUNITY HELP?

Ask your visitors to tell their stories to the Smithsonian. Remind your visitors to explore www.MuseumonMainStreet.org!

TIPS FOR BEING AN INFORMED AND EFFECTIVE DOCENT

Introduce yourself and make sure each visitor in your group feels welcome.

Tell visitors that **Water/Ways** was created by an innovative partnership that brings Smithsonian exhibitions to rural towns. Each exhibition is specifically designed to be small and flexible.

Orient your visitors to the exhibition, and give them a starting point from which you'll begin the tour. Give your visitors an idea of what to expect—how long the tour will last (30 minutes is a good average), whether there are seating areas along the way, where facilities are located, etc.

Assess your audience and structure your tour accordingly. Younger visitors often relate to technology, popular culture, and references to today, while older visitors relate to historical content and personal memories. Be prepared to provide information to any visitors that may not be able to access the exhibition due to a disability.

Be familiar with the exhibition and the information provided. Feel free to carry your handbook on tours, but avoid reading directly from it. Aim for comfortable and conversational exchanges with your visitors.

Encourage visitors to ask questions. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," but try to find out the answer before the visitors leave.

Avoid focusing on questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Ask open-ended questions like: "What do you think ...?" or "How do you feel about ...?"

Give visitors time to think about and answer questions. Usually someone will speak up in about 10 to 15 seconds.

Be sure to practice your tour with museum staff, other docents and volunteers, and your family and friends. Remember, if you're relaxed and having a good time, your visitors will enjoy themselves too. Have fun!

As representatives of the museum, docents are often asked all sorts of questions. BE PREPARED!

Know the museum's name, address, phone number, hours of operation, and the location of the gift shop, restrooms, water fountains, and seating areas for all visitors, including those with disabilities.

Be familiar with dates and times of programs and special events associated with **Water/Ways**, and with other exhibitions in the museum.





To learn more about the exhibition, visit our website at
www.MuseumonMainStreet.org/water

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