

# Drop on the planet: Visualizing water on Earth

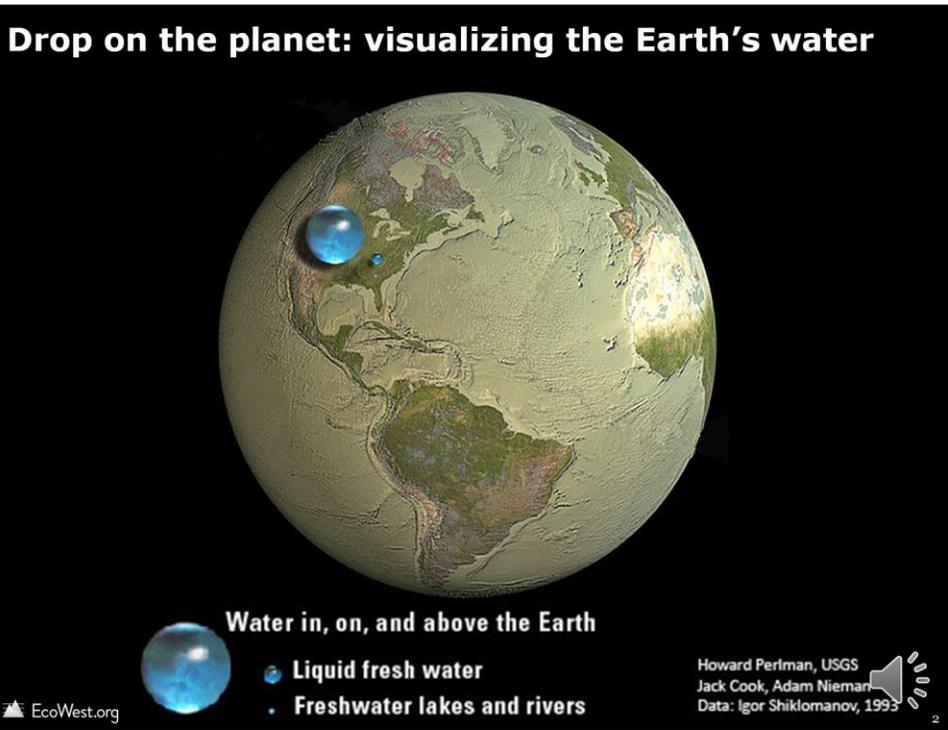


 EcoWest.org

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In this EcoWest presentation, we share graphics for visualizing water on Earth.



Narrative: Although the Earth is mostly covered by water, the volume is tiny when compared to the Earth's surface area. This graphic shows all of the world's water, the total amount of freshwater, and the volume of rivers and lakes using spheres.

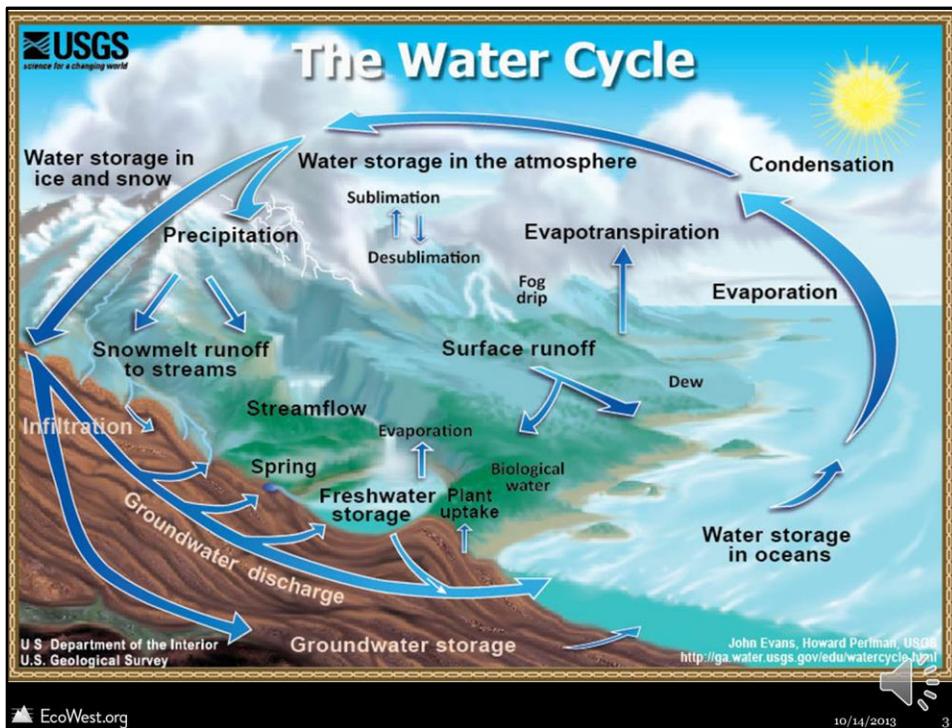
Source: US Geological Survey, [Howard Perlmán](#), USGS; globe illustration by [Jack Cook](#), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (©); [Adam Nieman](#).

URL: <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/earthwherewater.html>

Notes: All Earth's water, liquid fresh water, and water in lakes and rivers

Spheres showing:

- (1) All water (sphere over western U.S., 860 miles in diameter)
- (2) Fresh liquid water in the ground, lakes, swamps, and rivers (sphere over Kentucky, 169.5 miles in diameter), and
- (3) Fresh-water lakes and rivers (sphere over Georgia, 34.9 miles in diameter).



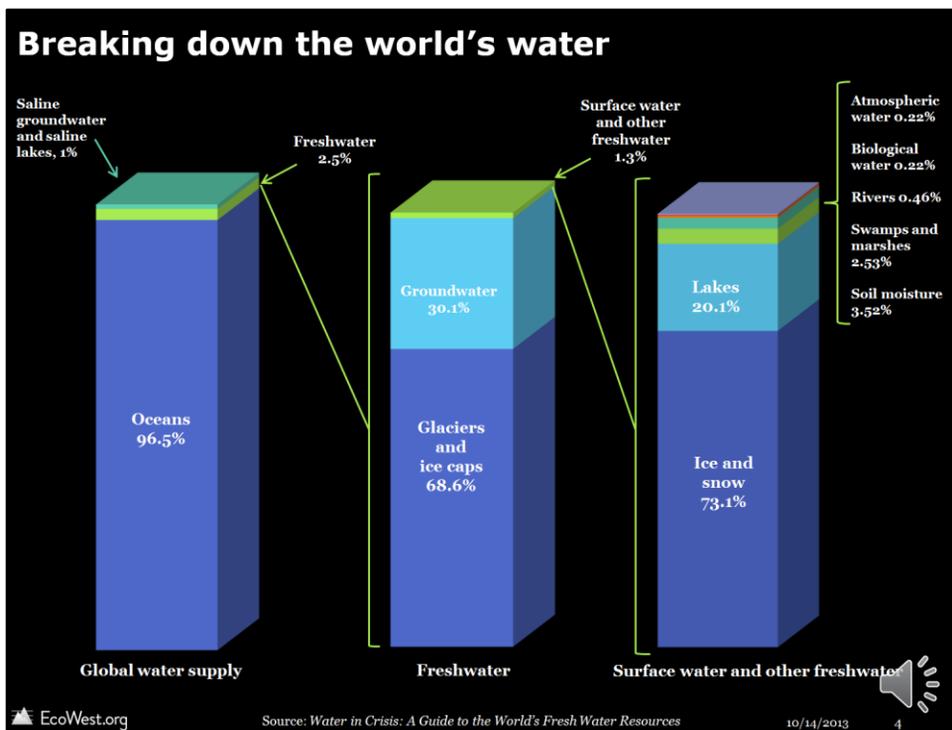
Narrative: This graphic illustrates the water cycle. Water from the ocean and other sources evaporates into the atmosphere, while plants give off moisture through evapotranspiration. The moisture condenses and falls to the earth as rain or snow. Much of that freshwater is stored as snow and ice. The snowmelt and surface runoff fills creeks, streams and rivers, which either terminate in lakes or reach the sea. Below the ground, water seeps into underground aquifers and formations. The subsurface flow feeds streams and rivers, provided that humans don't lower the water table through well pumping. It's important to note that this is a closed cycle—we can't make any more water on Earth than we already have.

Title: The Water Cycle

Source: US Geological Survey

URL: <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/watercycle.html>

Notes:



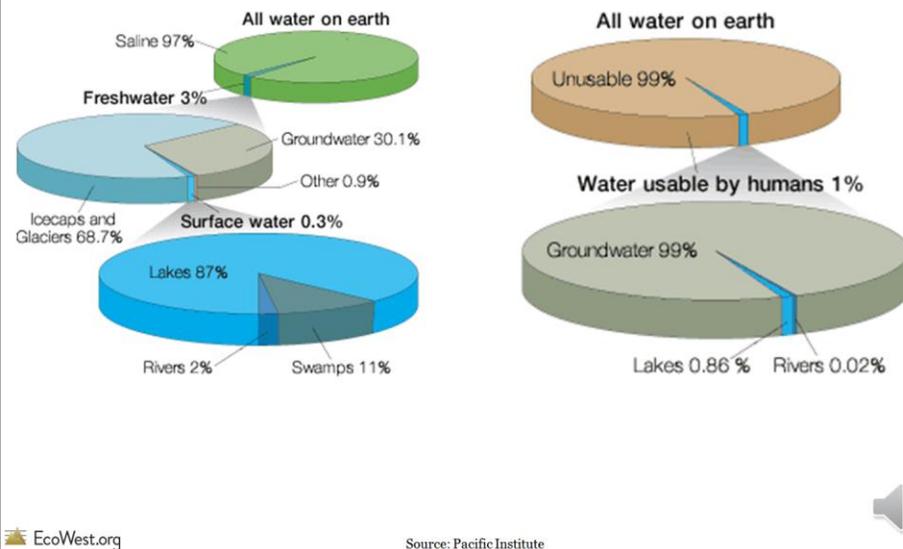
Narrative: These bars illustrate Earth's total water distribution. About 97 percent of all water is in the oceans, with freshwater comprising just 2.5% of total water supply. The majority of this freshwater is locked up in glaciers and icecaps, with most of the remaining freshwater found below our feet as groundwater. Surface and other freshwater (including ice, snow, lakes, and rivers) make up a very small fraction of total freshwater.

Source: Igor Shiklomanov's chapter "World fresh water resources" in Peter H. Gleick (editor), 1993, *Water in Crisis: A Guide to the World's Fresh Water Resources* (Oxford University Press, New York).

URL: <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/earthwherewater.html>

Note: "Glaciers and ice caps" represents semi-permanent storage of freshwater, while "ice and snow" represents seasonally frozen water supply.

## The world's water



Narrative: Here's a different view, using pie charts instead of bars, to represent the various types of water on Earth. Groundwater amounts to 99 percent of all the water that's usable by humans.

Source: Pacific Institute

URL: <http://www.pacificwater.org/pages.cfm/water-services/water-demand-management/water-distribution/?printerfriendly=true>

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