

U.S. water use down in the '80s

PERIODICALLY throughout the year, the Consumer Mailbag does an "Eco-Notes" column where topics of environmental interest are discussed. Recently, three reports have come into the Concern Office about water that I wanted to share with you:

WATER CONSUMPTION:
A five-year survey done by the U.S. Geological Survey shows a drop in water use in the U.S. 1980-85, the date of the last survey.

The report shows a 10 percent decline in both fresh and saline-water drawn from lakes, streams, wells and springs for use in homes, offices, farms, industry and thermoelectric power plants.

However, since the USGS began its survey, water use has more than doubled from less than 200 billion to almost 400 billion gallons per day.

One possible reason for the decline in water use may have been because water removal costs have increased as water levels dropped with increased use in the past.

Another reason may be that more water was being recycled for industry and irrigation while commodity production dropped.

Last summer's drought may show increased water use, especially in areas like Nebraska. It withdrew twice as much as usual from ground-water supplies and began irrigation of crops as much earlier than usual. In Washington, D.C., demand for water during the first half of July was 24 percent above average.

— From a USGS news release
WATER CONSERVATION:
Western California farmers are participating in a three-year irrigation management project to reduce water use. They are using gypsum blocks to help cut their use by up to 58 percent in some cases, according to INFORM, a non-profit, environmental research group.

These marshmallow-sized, plaster-of-paris blocks were systematically buried at different locations and depths in flood-irrigated fields. Each block contains electrodes connected to insulated wires drawn to the surface.

Twice a week, readings are taken of the electrical conductivity of the blocks by connecting a small battery-powered meter to the surface wires. Conductivity levels vary with the wetness of the blocks which reflects the moisture level of the soil in that area.



Terry Gibb

Using this information, farmers can determine where crops are being overwatered and adjust irrigation to the correct amounts.

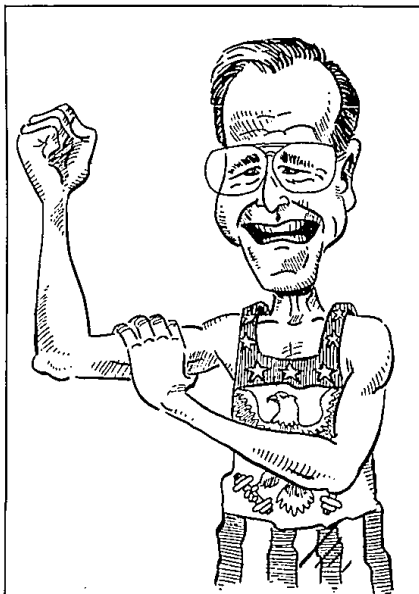
— From an Inform news release
WATER POLLUTION

CLEANUP:
The previously polluted Suyong River in South Korea, site of the yachting events in the 88 Olympics, was cleaned and beautified through the use of aeration machines into a river that now supports a healthy fish population.

The AIRE-O2 machines use an above-water motor to turn an underwater propeller at the end of a hollow shaft. The propeller pushes water outward away from the shaft, creating a vacuum that sucks air down the shaft.

The oxygen-enriched water gets pushed out and distributed throughout the river. This constant motion keeps wastes in suspension and circulates the bacteria that breaks down these wastes. The extra oxygen in the water causes the bacteria to proliferate on a large scale and speed up decomposition of the wastes.

— From The Christian Science Monitor



MARVIN TEEPLES/art work

George Bush, who runs three miles four or five times a week, is probably the most physically fit president we've ever had, according to the father of "aerobics."



fitness
Barry Franklin

Biggest killer carries no gun

JUDGING from newspaper headlines and the sensational television reports, one might get the impression that most Americans die from one of three causes: AIDS, murder or auto accidents.

In reality, however, these problems cause far fewer deaths than heart disease. To put it into perspective:

Your chance of contracting AIDS (assuming you are heterosexual and not an IV drug user) are one in a million.

Your chance of being murdered — one in 10,000.

Your chance of dying in a car accident — one in 5,000.

Your chance of dying of heart disease — one in two.

DID YOU know that . . .

• According to the Surgeon General's 1988 Report on Nutrition and Health, 50 to 70 percent of hypertensive individuals are sensitive to salt. Their blood pressures rise markedly when they take in moderate amounts of salt.

• There is no evidence that lowering your blood cholesterol too much can be dangerous.

• If you have trouble remembering which form of cholesterol is "good," think "fousy" for LDL and "helpful" for HDL. A high level of HDL-cholesterol is believed to be protective against heart disease.

• Recently, doctors at Michigan State University reported a case of a 22-year-old world class weightlifter who experienced a heart attack. His blood cholesterol at hospital admission was 586. The clinical findings suggested that the problem was caused by prolonged and excessive use of anabolic steroids.

• According to Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., father of "aerobics," George Bush is probably the most physically fit president we've ever had. Bush, who has undergone exercise testing at the Aerobics Center in Dallas, "runs at least four or five days a week, usually three miles at a time," said Cooper in an interview.

Barry A. Franklin, Ph.D., is director of cardiac rehabilitation and exercise laboratories at William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology at Wayne State University's School of Medicine.

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