

Ethical Water Management

I. Ethical Management

Water justice requires ethical management of water, rather than management of water as an economic good.

II. Inter-generational Equity

Water justice requires that we manage water as a gift from God to be available for life-sustaining purposes to the current and all future generations. We must not deplete groundwater reserves, we must protect the sustained availability of surface water, and we must not destroy the ability to use ground or surface water by polluting it.

III. Protect Biodiversity and Aquatic Ecosystems

Water justice requires responsible human action to preserve biodiversity and to maintain the ecological integrity and resilience of aquatic ecosystems.

IV. Assure Universal Access to Water and Sanitation

Water justice requires universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation. Efforts to provide such access should give preference to the poor and marginalized.

V. Assure Access to Water by Smallholders

Water justice requires that water be available for use by subsistence and smallholder farmers, herders, and fishers.

VI. Assure Availability of Water for Priority Uses

Water justice requires that three uses of water take precedence over any other water uses: water for household uses; water for food provided by smallholder farmers, herders and fishers; and water to maintain aquatic ecosystem integrity and resilience.

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VII. Democratic Water governance

Water justice requires democratic governance of water.

VIII. Water Is a Common Good

Water justice requires that water be considered a common good. No compensable private rights in water should be created.

IX. Prevent Economic Exploitation of Water

Water justice requires that use of water for commercial purposes be strictly regulated. Economic exploitation of water is unethical. The principles explore the extent to which water marketing, commercial water bottling and consumption of bottled water, privatization of water services, and water pricing practices constitute economic exploitation of water.

X. Meet Water Stewardship Responsibilities

Water users have profound stewardship responsibilities with respect to water that we are ethically bound to meet. The principles suggest that we should avoid waste, pollution, alteration of natural flow, desalination of marine water, and groundwater use that leads to saltwater intrusion.

Susan Smith represents the national United Church of Christ on EWN's advisory board and served as preliminary drafter of the principles. She is available to meet with Central Pacific Conference congregations wishing to explore the principles and/or other water justice concerns in more detail. Just e-mail her at: susanlsmithor@gmail.com.