



WATER QUALITY AND CONSERVATION (1984, R1992, R2000, R2001, R2007)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects urges efficient use of available water supplies, equitable allocation of water resources, and the provision of safe drinking water. ASLA encourages land use practices that conserve and protect water resources and related ecosystems and eliminate all forms of water pollution. The Society urges multi-functional integration of water resource facilities with natural ecosystems and human communities.

Rationale

The nation depends on ample, clean water supplies to preserve health, to sustain a high standard of living and to maintain the quality of ecosystems. Water is a finite and valuable resource that is shared among human beings, and between human beings and ecosystems. The natural circulation of water transcends political and property boundaries. Our nation's water quality is being degraded: waterways have become dumping grounds for wastes; fossil water reserves are drawn down; wetlands are being drained and filled; rivers are channelized; building over streams and in floodplains has increased downstream flooding; obsolete infrastructure has generated "non-point" pollution; and water has been wasted by the unnecessary use of highly water-demanding plants and unfit irrigation technology. Impervious surfaces caused by sprawling urban development increase volumes and rates of storm flows, carry pollutants into streams, prevent groundwater recharge, reduce stream base flows, and impact water temperatures. The channels, dams and reservoirs built to mitigate these effects have further disrupted ecosystems and human communities.

Maintenance of the nation's economy and lifestyle will depend partly upon our ability to conserve water, avoid water-borne diseases, reduce pollution and use land appropriately. Healthy habitats can be preserved and maintained. It is possible to rehabilitate degraded aquatic and riparian habitats: planting can be done with locally adapted plants and in self-regenerating ecological communities; runoff and effluents can be reclaimed to reduce the need for imported fresh water; reservoirs of all kinds can be adapted to integrate with multi-functional natural ecosystems and human communities; and new development can be arranged and constructed to minimize impervious cover. Excess urban runoff can be directed through soil and vegetation to recharge ground water, filter through natural cleansing systems and maintain the base flows of streams.

AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTS
636 EYE STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC
20001-3736

www.asla.org
1.888.999.ASLA
T 202.898.2444
F 202.898.1185