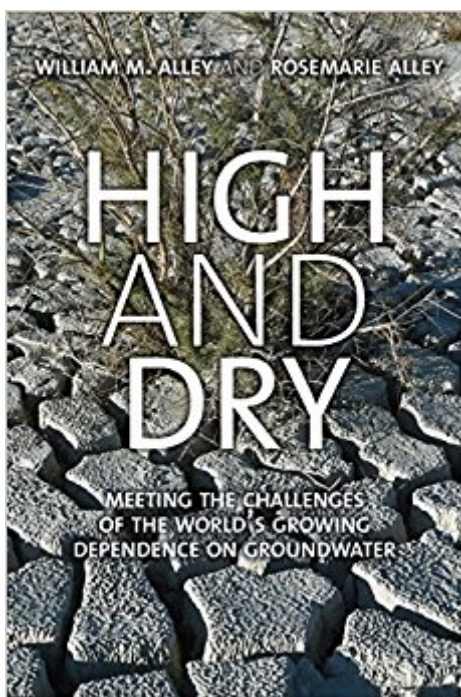


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# High And Dry: Meeting The Challenges Of The World's Growing Dependence On Groundwater



## Synopsis

An engaging call to understand and protect groundwater, the primary source of drinking water for almost half of the world's population. Groundwater is essential for drinking water and food security. It provides enormous environmental benefits by keeping streams and rivers flowing. But a growing global population, widespread use of industrial chemicals, and climate change threaten this vital resource. Groundwater depletion and contamination has spread from isolated areas to many countries throughout the world. In this accessible and timely book, hydrology expert William M. Alley and science writer Rosemarie Alley sound the call to protect groundwater. Drawing on examples from around the world, including case studies in the United States, Canada, Australia, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors examine groundwater from key scientific and socioeconomic perspectives. While addressing the serious nature of groundwater problems, the book includes stories of people who are making a difference in protecting this critical resource.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Earth's water problems are both in quantity and in quality are one of the 21st century's greatest challenges. High and Dry provides a vital roadmap for dealing with them." —John Fleck, author of *Water is for Fighting Over: and Other Myths about Water in the West* "Imagine a book about groundwater that reads like a novel, and is overflowing with interesting and essential knowledge about a much-neglected topic. This is the book." —Bruce Babbitt, former United States Secretary of the Interior "High and Dry is

the right book at the right time. Groundwater is unseen but the Alleys bring the issues related to this vital resource to the fore for all to see. •Michael Campana, Oregon State University and American Water Resources Association “There is little information available for general consumption that explains why groundwater is important, how it works and what can be done to solve current problems. This book provides that information in an extremely readable way. •Mark Giordano, Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service “The partnership of an eminent scientist and a science writer has produced vivid narratives spanning the globe about groundwater: a critical yet overused resource. They propose sensible reforms to curb over pumping and protect the environment. Their message deserves a wide audience. •Robert Glennon, University of Arizona and author of *Unquenchable: America’s Water Crisis and What To Do About It*

Director of science and technology for the National Ground Water Association, William M. Alley is a hydrology expert and authority on groundwater. Rosemarie Alley is a veteran science writer. They previously coauthored the book *Too Hot to Touch*, on nuclear waste.

A valuable resource for those of us that care about the environment, public health, and simple drinking water, worldwide. All of us are affected by the delicate balance between human use and groundwater realities. This book is a dense but relatively easy read. Some chapters present facts that are simply harrowing from a scientific standpoint, others, such as the chapter dealing with the San Pedro River and its relevance to migratory birds, profoundly disheartening. I wish I could give this book to my legislators, to developers, to city managers. People need to listen, to heed the cautionary information Alley offers in this book.

This is a fine book for water wonks and anybody who thinks very deeply about the future and the sustainability of our natural resources must be a water wonk. This broad-ranging book is well-researched, clear, and concise. Groundwater is complex, but the authors -- William Alley and Rosemarie Alley -- managed to make their report authoritative but also easy to read. I know just enough about groundwater, particularly in the American West, to have a basis for my opinion this conclusion. I live in Colorado on the South Platte River and have for a hunk of my life, save for 20 years along the Colorado River. The alleys worked through the great complexity to create a relatively simple explanation that I had not seen before. To make it that easy to read, writers really must know their subjects. I think they do. I had hoped for more on the Ogallala Aquifer

but, of course, much has already been written, including "Ogallala Blue." Again, a very good read. No, not a bodice ripper. But never a trudge. Just the right pacing.

Good all around and balanced read on the the state of groundwater conditions in the U.S. and elsewhere

You are about to read an incredibly positive review of a truly amazing book, so for balance, I will get my negative comments out of the way first. First, the title, *High and Dry: Meeting the Challenges of the World's Growing Dependence on Groundwater*, is alarmist, though the book is not probably the work of the publisher wanting to sell more books. Second, after 246 outstanding pages of science and history, the authors show themselves to be climate change alarmists. Unfortunately, a career in government can cause that. The authors of the book are William and Rosemarie Alley. William is the former chief of the Office of Groundwater for the U.S. Geological Survey. His wife, Rosemarie, is an accomplished science writer. As I received the nation's first Ph.D. in groundwater hydrology and authored some of the earliest books on the subject, I was excited to get my hands on a contemporary discussion of the topic by these two important authors. *High and Dry* is an outstanding compilation of the discipline's history, along with precise explanations of technological advances. I believe any school that teaches groundwater hydrology should base an entire course on this book. The authors provide case studies of water problems in Australia, Canada, China, India, sub-Saharan Africa, and the United States, including stories of people who are solving water problems regionally and around the world. Among the topics the authors address are water shortages, ownership debates, contamination problems, well-construction techniques, artificial recharge projects, and the impacts of shale-gas development. Each story reads like a novel, making the book very easy to read. *State Water Fights* The Alleys open by describing the ongoing battle between the states of Florida and Georgia over water stored in Lake Lanier during dry years. The book then moves on to a discussion of the most famous aquifer in the United States, the Ogallala, which runs through the nation's midsection, and the authors explain the use of tandem satellites to measure groundwater volumes and variations in the aquifer. The authors describe the 40-year battle between Arizona and California over the Colorado River. Although the Colorado River is only the sixth-largest river in the United States, the water from it is far and away the most litigated over. Conflicts over the water in the Colorado River began even before the federal government built its largest-ever public works project along it: the Central Arizona Project, which

carries water 300 miles south and uses 14 pumping stations to lift water up 3,000 feet over the area's mountains. Pipelines, Species, and Salt The Alleys accurately describe the massive underground pipelines used to transport groundwater across Libya, the complex groundwater irrigation systems in Saudi Arabia, and how the government controls water drawn from Texas's mammoth Edwards aquifer to save endangered fish species dependent on a few springs fed by the aquifer, instead of serving the needs of the growing human population in the region. The Alleys describe critical efforts to keep salty ocean water from traveling underground inland while people lower water levels in groundwater wells near the coasts. This leads to a discussion of California's massive groundwater storage, recycling, and recharge system, the Groundwater Replenishment System. Although the book has very few illustrations, one, situated in the authors' discussion of land subsidence, is priceless. The picture shows a 36-foot-tall telephone pole marked with the levels of the land surface in 1925, 1955, and 1977 near Mendota, California. The land has subsided dramatically, as the marks on the pole show, due to heavy pumping of groundwater in the area. As the Alleys note, subsidence in Mendota is dwarfed by the subsidence Mexico City has experienced over the past century. Of great interest to all readers will be an excellent explanation of why hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling for shale gas do not normally pose a threat to groundwater or drinking-water supplies. This wonderful book combines the information contained in a nonfiction technical book with the readability of a novel and is likely to keep the interest of any inquisitive reader. Jay Lehr, Ph.D. (jlehr@heartland.org) is science director of The Heartland Institute.

High and Dry is a great book that tells great stories about the groundwater issues we face-- a topic that has been in desperate need of books and resources aimed at the public. I already had copy for myself, and I just ordered one for my parents. I am a hydrogeology student, and this is an interesting and accessible read that shares what I do with my family and friends. It's a good balance of science, history, and policy without getting preachy or depressing, like a lot of popular environmental books can be. This could be an awesome book for upper high school and college-level environmental science classes to read and discuss.

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