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A Twenty-First Century US Water Policy

Juliet Christian-Smith, Peter H. Gleick

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It is zero hour for a new US water policy! At a time when many countries are adopting new national approaches to water management, the United States still has no cohesive federal policy, and water-related authorities are dispersed across more than 30 agencies. Here, at last, is a vision for what we as a nation need to do to manage our most vital resource. In this book, leading thinkers at world-class water research institution the Pacific Institute present clear and readable analysis and recommendations for a new federal water policy to confront our national and global challenges at a critical time.

What exactly is at stake? In the 21st century, pressures on water resources in the United States are growing and conflicts among water users are worsening. Communities continue to struggle to meet water quality standards and to ensure that safe drinking water is available for all. And new challenges are arising as climate change and extreme events worsen, new water quality threats materialize, and financial constraints grow. Yet the United States has not stepped up with adequate leadership to address these problems.

The inability of national policymakers to safeguard our water makes the United States increasingly vulnerable to serious disruptions of something most of us take for granted: affordable, reliable, and safe water. This book provides an independent assessment of water issues and water management in the United States, addressing emerging and persistent water challenges from the perspectives of science, public policy, environmental justice, economics, and law. With fascinating case studies and first-person accounts of what helps and hinders good water management, this is a clear-eyed look at what we need for a 21st century U.S. water policy.

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