
News Release

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Editors: Photographs are available at <http://sd.water.usgs.gov/public/newsroom.html>

South Dakota Uses 500 Million Gallons of Water a Day

The latest five-year compilation of water use in South Dakota shows that the state uses about 500 million gallons of water per day. About 54 percent of this water comes from ground water and 46 percent from surface water.

The report, “Estimated Use of Water in South Dakota, 2005,” was recently released by the U.S. Geological Survey and prepared in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. The report is available online at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2008/5216/>.

Irrigation is by far the biggest water use in South Dakota. Consuming almost 300 million gallons per day, it accounts for 58 percent of the total water withdrawn. More than 400,000 acres were irrigated in 2005.

The second biggest water use is for public supply – about 100 million gallons per day. Public supply refers to water withdrawn by public and private water suppliers and delivered to multiple users primarily for domestic, commercial, and industrial uses. Public-supply systems served about 86 percent of South Dakota’s population in 2005.

Water withdrawals for domestic purposes from private wells totaled about 8 million gallons per day. The population using private wells was just under 110,000 people, with a per-capita use of 70 gallons per day. Pennington County had the largest population using private wells, followed by Minnehaha County.

Other uses were for livestock (about 48 million gallons per day), aquaculture (about 33 million gallons per day), and mining (about 10 million gallons per day). Withdrawals for both industrial and thermoelectric uses were less than 5 million gallons per day.

Total water use in South Dakota decreased about 175 million gallons per day between 1985 and 2005 despite an increase in the State’s population of about 70,000 people. According to USGS Hydrologist Janet Carter, the decrease is mostly attributable to decreased withdrawals for irrigation purposes, which decreased about 168 million gallons per day from 1985 to 2005.

“Another trend that is apparent in South Dakota is an increase in the number of people obtaining water for household purposes from public water systems and a decrease in the number of people using private wells,” said Carter.

Additional information about USGS water-resources studies in South Dakota can be obtained by visiting the USGS South Dakota Water Science Center home page at <http://sd.water.usgs.gov>.

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