Your Water Footprint

Recorded by Jennifer Santangelo

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Jen: Good morning class.

All: Good morning Mrs. Santangelo.

Jen: Today we are going to learn about water. Can anyone tell me what taking a shower, doing dishes and manufacturing goods all have in common?

Jake: They all use water?

Jen: That's correct, Jacob. Now tell me, does anyone know what a water footprint is?

Jul: It's when you get out of the pool in the summer and leave a big wet footprint!

Jen: No, but that's a good guess. Anyone else?

Lexi: Is it kind of like the carbon footprint we learned about?

Jen: That's right it is! Calculating your water foot print allows you to track how much water you use.

Jake: Well if the earth is 71% water, then why do we need to worry about water footprints?

Jul: Yeah, don't we have plenty of water?

Lexi: Actually not all of the earth's water supply is usable.

Jen: Good point Alexis! Most of the earth's water is either salt water, which we can't drink, or it is frozen away in glaciers and polar ice caps.

Jake: So why can't we take the salt out of sea water and use that?

Jen: We could, but it's an expensive, energy consuming process called desalination. We already have an energy crisis on our hands, so this is probably not the best solution.

Jul: But why can't we just melt some icebergs and get some more water?

Lexi: Because global warming is already doing that. It dosen't help cause all it does is raise sea levels, not drinking water levels.

Jen: Another good point Alexis. So, it would seem that our only choice is to curb our usage, thus the water footprint.

Jake: So how does the water footprint work?

Jen: I'm glad you asked Jacob. A water footprint is the total amount of freshwater that is used by us, by our community, or by a business.

Jul: You mean like a store?

Jen: Yes, Julia a business such as a store, or a factory that makes the products that ship to the store to be sold. Water is used in everything from faucets at home to manufacturing goods and services that are used by us and our community.

Lexi: I understand the idea behind a water foot print, but what does manufacturing have to do with anything?

Jen: Manufacturing is a very water intensive process, Alexis. For instance, did you know that the construction of a computer uses less water than it takes to make a pair of jeans?

All: Nuh uh, no way, wow.

Jen: As a matter of fact, 16% of all water used is for production of either food, or goods. So a water footprint measures all of the water you consume. This includes the water needed to make the products you eat and buy, as well as the water you drink or bathe in.

Jul: So how can we figure out our water footprint?

Jake: Yeah – or cut back how much we use?

Lexi: Is there some sort of special calculator or something?

Jen: Ok one at a time. Julia we figure out our water footprint by tracking our usage. This can be done in a variety of ways. Jacob, curbing our usage is much easier than you would think. And no Alexis, a regular calculator will do.

Jul: I don't have a calculator.

Jake: We can share mine.

Lexi: SHHH!

Jen: For starters, there is a wonderful website that will take you on a virtual tour of your own home. It will tell you how much water you use throughout your day. It takes into account your diet, your home usage and even your consumer choices. Other websites give you the tools and

information to track your personal water footprint. I will send you home today with a list of internet resources.

Jake: But what about cutting back on water …how do we do that?

Jen: There are many ways to do that Jacob. Some you parents will need to implement, such as water saving nozzles on the showers in your house. But many others you can do yourself.

Jul: Like what?

Jen: Well Julia, turning off the water when you brush your teeth is one small way to cut back on water consumption.

Jul: I remember that from watching Barney the Dinosaur when I was little!

Jake: I hate that show.

Lexi: Me too!

Jen: Ok class settle down….another way we can all curb our consumption is by decreasing the amount of meat we eat.

Jul: What? Meat?

Jake: Huh? Did she say meat?

Lexi: SHHH!

Jen: Yes class, meat. It takes a lot of water to not only raise the cattle that meat comes from, but cleaning, packaging and distribution are all very water intensive processes. I think for homework tonight you will access the websites I give you and start calculating your own water footprint.

All: Groan…

Jul: You too can decrease your water footprint by implementing cost effective measures.

Jake: By using water saving shower heads, consuming less beef or purchasing energy star appliances.

Lexi: For more information check out www.waterfootprint.org , www.smartplanet.com, or H2o conserve.

Jen: To calculate your water footprint, visit environment.nationalgeographic.com.

ALL: Remember – water is our most precious resource!!!

References:

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