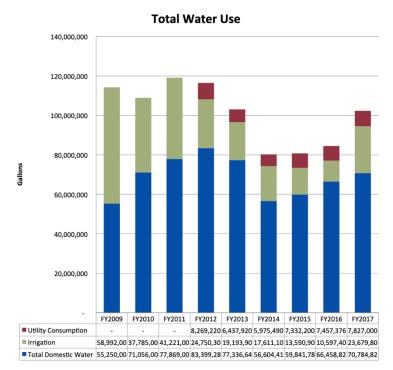
DU Students Are Ignoring the Denver Basin Aquifer By Callie Miller

During the last few weeks' crazy snowstorms verging on blizzards, Colorado was in a stupor of shoveling every hour and driving about 5 miles per hour just to get around the block. For the few days that we got to lounge in the abnormally hot sunshine, we heard our gutters and drainpipes working to move all that precipitation from our roofs, glad to know that our dry, desert-state was getting the water it needed, right?

Well, actually no. Our state, or more closely to home, our great city of Denver, is—and has been—running out of water.

After seeing DU's newest <u>2019 Sustainability Report</u>, I feel great about what our school is doing to prolong our time here on mother earth—if not save her—but one thing stood out that I didn't understand: where's the information about our water usage?

In 2018 our Sustainability Report showed incredible improvement in our irrigation water usage, but what was truly concerning is our domestic water usage. Domestic water use is exactly what it sounds like: all "household" ways in which we use our water here at DU like for drinking, washing our clothes and dishes, brushing our teeth, showering, flushing our toilets, making food, and similar actions. According to DU's 2018 Sustainability Report, 69% of the water we used was domestic and it didn't look to be getting any better!



We're Colorado, we get so much mountain runoff, so why not use it, right? Trust me, I was in the same boat to think this, but our water consumption isn't just from our beautiful mountains, it's also from where we cannot see at all—underground. The Denver Basin Aquifer,



one among many, is right below our feet and drying up by the second. According to The Denver Post, our water wells from the Denver Basin fall 30 feet and we use 38,742 acre-feet of them a year. The mountain runoff and precipitation surely help 'recharge' the aquifer, but not as fast as we're taking the water out.

Coloradans have known of the depleting aquifers and <u>drought</u> for a long time now, but we've stopped hearing about it. It's time to bring it back into conversation.

Colorado has seven principle aquifers which include the well-known Ogallala Aquifer in the Northeasters Plains, but according to many

sources like The Denver Post and Environmental Geology, <u>Ogallala</u> and other aquifers are in an equal if not worse position than our own Denver Basin.

Normally, agriculture and irrigation are the main issues for aquifers running dry, but this is Denver, this is DU, we need to cut back in other ways. CGS (the Colorado Geological Survey) tells us that the Denver Basin Aquifer is greatly used for domestic purposes, and if DU is using such an important water source, shouldn't we be wary of how much we're using?

Yes, college is most of our first times living away from home, and with so much freedom we might not know how much water use is too much water use. I get it. I, too, enjoy a twenty-minute shower and I would love to clean off every night before bed, but we all need to make sacrifices.

"I forgot to pay attention to how long the water is running" is unacceptable. "My clothes get dirty after just one wear" is just a bold-face lie. How many more times are we going to hear excuses—or even worse use them ourselves—before it's too late to recharge our aquifer fully?

9News gives a great <u>list</u> of ways to conserve water including shutting off the faucet while brushing your teeth and doing full loads of laundry rather than just small ones. New and improved lists of ways to be a better water consumer in Denver are posted regularly, so check out what might be best for your circumstance. Whether you're on-campus in dorms or if you're off-campus in a place of your own, there are always ways to improve our domestic water statistic.

So yes, the recent snowfall did help recharge the Denver Basin Aquifer, but already DU's runoff alone has most likely been used up again. Don't use more water than you can give back to the earth, that's just selfish.