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**Where would we be without the Great Lakes?**

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials: Hand out the following (and read introduction as desired), inviting participants to use the graph to tally total daily amounts of Great Lakes water used on their own in subsequent days.

**Introduction**

You may not believe it, but you have a lot in common with Abraham Lincoln, dinosaurs, bald eagles, and even Egypt’s King Tut, who lived thousands of years ago. Any species who has ever lived on this earth has breathed the same air and used the same water that you use today, and your children will use in the future.

The earth is a closed system: all the supplies of air, water and other resources are finite. We cannot get new supplies from space. For those of us in the Great Lakes region, fresh water may seem endless – but in reality, the lakes are a finite, sensitive ecosystem that is affected by even small changes to the lakes’ quantity and quality.

Keep a personal record of when, why and how much water you use over one week using the average numbers listed below, invite other family members and friends to do the same, and compare your results. Can you change some of your daily habits to use less water? Did you pour any items down the drain that might pollute the lakes or be unsafe for animals living in the water? How else might you dispose of these materials, or decide to not use them?

**How much Great Lakes water is used to...**

Flush a toilet 1.3 (low flow) to 7 (traditional toilet)

Take a shower 17 gallons per 8 minutes

Take a bath up to 50 gallons

Brush your teeth (water running) 2-5 gallons/minute

Wash dishes by hand 20 gallons

Run a dishwasher 8 (energy star machines) to 25 gallons

Wash clothes in a washing machine 7 (new front loading) - 45 gallons

Water your lawn (averaged) 35 gallons per half acre up to 180

Average resident’s water use per year 107,000 gallons

Average US person daily 80-100 gallons

**How do your daily numbers compare?**

Flush a toilet ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Take a shower ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Take a bath ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Brush your teeth (water running) ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Wash dishes by hand ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Run a dishwasher ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Wash clothes in a washing machine ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

Water your lawn (averaged) ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­-------------------------------------

**Optional**

Brainstorm other ways that Great Lakes water is used in the region (agriculture, manufacturing, recreation/tourism, shipping, source of food, power, transportation, natural beauty)

Sources: Up Close and Personal: Water Use at Home, Water Education Foundation, <https://www.watereducation.org/post/close-and-personal-water-use-home> (accessed July 3, 2024)

How Much Water Does the Average Person Use Daily? Dropconnect.com, <https://dropconnect.com/how-much-water-does-the-average-person-use-per-day/> (accessed July 3, 2024)