

Essay

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Floods and droughts are becoming common in Georgia due to climate change. Floods and droughts are catastrophic events that can affect people's access to clean water. However, people can do many different things to conserve water to help the water supply.

The last major flood in metro Atlanta was the Catastrophic Atlanta Flood of 2009. It affected people's water supply in parts of Georgia. Floods affect our access to clean water because they lead to rivers overflowing. If rivers overflow, the dirt and roadkill in the flood water will enter the lakes and rivers. Rivers and lakes are freshwater. Freshwater is the water people drink. Only 3 percent of the world's water is freshwater. Of this 3%, only 1.2% can be used for drinking since the remaining 1.8 percent is locked up in glaciers, permafrost, and is buried deep underground. That's not a lot of water for people to drink. We also have to think about everyday activities like bathing or cooking. The average metro-Atlantan uses 50 gallons of water per day.

From 2001-2018, 74% of natural disasters were water related. This is believed to have increased with climate change. When these disasters hit, the sea levels rise, and more freshwater becomes salty, further diminishing the 3 percent of freshwater. This shortage of freshwater can lead to increased death rates since people can only survive 3 days without water.

With all these events affecting our water, we need to conserve water and only use what is needed. We should fix leaks immediately and grow plants adapted to rainfall in our region, watering them when needed. We can also turn off taps when not needed like brushing your teeth, and shaving. We can use products labeled EPA WaterSense and ENERGY STAR to be efficient with appliance use.

We can also prevent stormwater pollution. Stormwater pollution is when rainwater runs off of surfaces and picks up pollutants. That water goes into storm drains and directly into the streams and lakes we use for water, thus again hurting our water supply. We can prevent this by properly disposing of liquid chemicals and oils, throwing away stuff that needs to be thrown away, going to a car wash that recycles water, disposing of expired medicine, picking up pet waste and so on. There are many things we can do to prevent stormwater pollution to save our water supply.

Farmers are one of the groups of people who are highly affected by climate change. Brandon Kirk is a sixth generation farmer. His family have been on their land since before the Civil War. He says, "People don't understand how flooding and droughts are effects of climate change". He says it makes it harder to produce crops to sell and farming is getting harder. According to Brandon, "It's really important for the

youth to know about climate change because one day they will be future leaders who will vote to make a change." Change starts with knowing about climate change and making a difference.