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Corporations And International Water Issues

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Corporations And International Water Issues

International water issues attract attention whenever severe events or conditions are manifested, e.g. storms, floods, drought, contamination, oil spills, etc. Less dramatic but still of critical importance in local settings are the constant conflicts between the needs of corporations which use water for processes, products, etc. and the needs of the local populations where corporate facilities are located. Depending on local conditions, corporations such as beverage bottlers, may exhaust or severely diminish ground water supplies in regions where ground water isn't substantial or where it can be depleted. Additionally, plant activity may result in contamination of aquifers or surface waters. While many multi-national corporations are developing sustainability initiatives and touting them domestically, it is unclear of the extent that such activity will carry over to international operations. One multi-national beverage company, for example, has pledged to replace all the water it extracts and uses in all of its operations. Specific plans are forthcoming but it would seem to be a challenge for a corporation to meet such an optimistic goal in all of its international settings. The field of industrial ecology provides the intellectual setting for sustainability activities in corporations. Water is a critical resource that is needed by many corporations in their international activities and thus the tenets of industrial ecology need to be adapted to corporate environmental planning and sustainability in water issues. This presentation will discuss these issues.