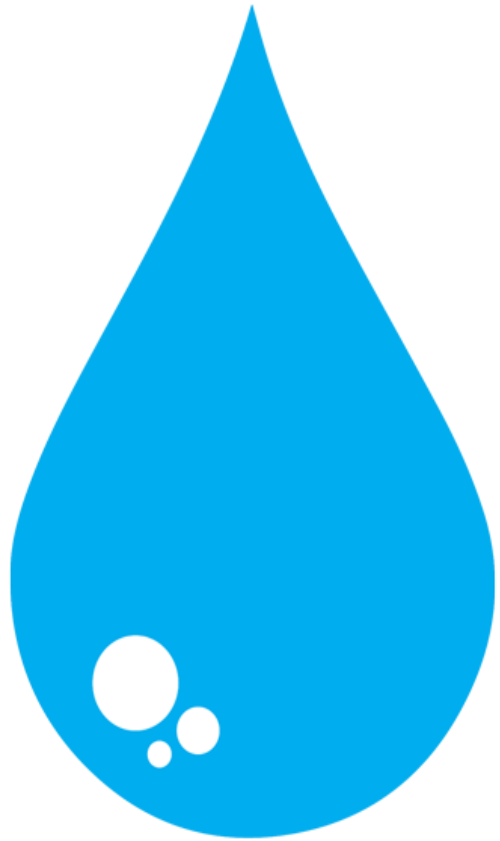
How the Humanities Can Help Us to Understand the Past and Possible Futures of Water

Rachel Havrelock | UIC Freshwater Lab



THE FRESHWATER LAB

WATER at Illinois

AREAS OF EXCELLENCE

WATER CENTERS, LABS, & FACILITIES

WATER COUNCIL & SCHOLARS

WATER OPPORTUNITIES

ISEE Research: Smart Water Disinfection

ISEE Research Stormwater & Mosquito Control

ISEE Research: Crude Oil Pollution Treatment

THE WATER COUNCIL

In 2014-15, the Illinois Water Scholars formed an Water Council to help coordinate the group and steer communication efforts. The Council members:

KEVIN O'BRIEN (CHAIRMAN)
Director, Illinois Sustainable Technology Center

AMY W. ANDO
Professor, Agricultural and Consumer Economics

JIM BEST
Professor, Geology

XIMING CAI
Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering

DON KEEFER
Senior Hydrogeologist, Illinois State Geological Survey

LAURA KEEFER
Geomorphologist, Illinois State Water Survey

PRAVEEN KUMAR
Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering

YU-FENG FORREST LIN
Hydrologist, Illinois State Geological Survey

BENITO MARIÑAS
Professor and Head, Civil and Environmental Engineering

BRIAN MILLER
Director, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant and Illinois Water Resources Center

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NANDAKISHORE RAJAGOPALAN
Associate Director for Applied Research, Illinois Sustanable Technology Center

BRUCE RHOADS
Professor, Geography and Geographic Information Science

DANIEL SCHNEIDER
Professor, Urban and Regional Planning

ASHLYNN STILLWELL
Assistant Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering

ANDREW STUMPF
Associate Quaternary Geologist, Illinois State Geological Survey

DAVID WAHL
Aquatic Biologist, Illinois Natural History Survey

Illinois Water Supply Information: Find Information on Your Drinking Water

This guide is intended to help citizens of Illinois find information about Illinois water supplies. It includes information resources from the state and federal government, news sources, and library holdings (including digital collections).

Drinking water alerts

To find boil orders and other drinking water alert information for public water supplies in your area start with your local public health department.

- Illinois Public Health Departments (alphabetical list by county)
- Illinois Public Health Departments (map)

Where does my water come from?

Illinois drinking water may come from municipal water supplies or private wells, depending on where you live. The tools below can help you identify the source of your water.

- Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Fact Sheets
- ILWater - Illinois Water Well Internet Map Service
- Domestic Well and Other Groundwater Data (aquifer maps)
- Illinois Water Utilities

What is in my water?

Water quality information is available from a variety of sources, depending on the type of supply. The tools below can help you become informed about the quality of your water.

- Drinking Water Watch
- Environmental Working Group Tap Water Database
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Annual Compliance Reports
- Notices to Public Water Supply Users of Groundwater Contamination
- Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Fact Sheets
- Water Testing

Maps and GIS Tools

Signatories of the memorandum of understanding


The Daniel P. Haerther Center
for Conservation and Research


klean
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IC


Columbia


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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
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LATINO CULTURAL CENTER
EXIT

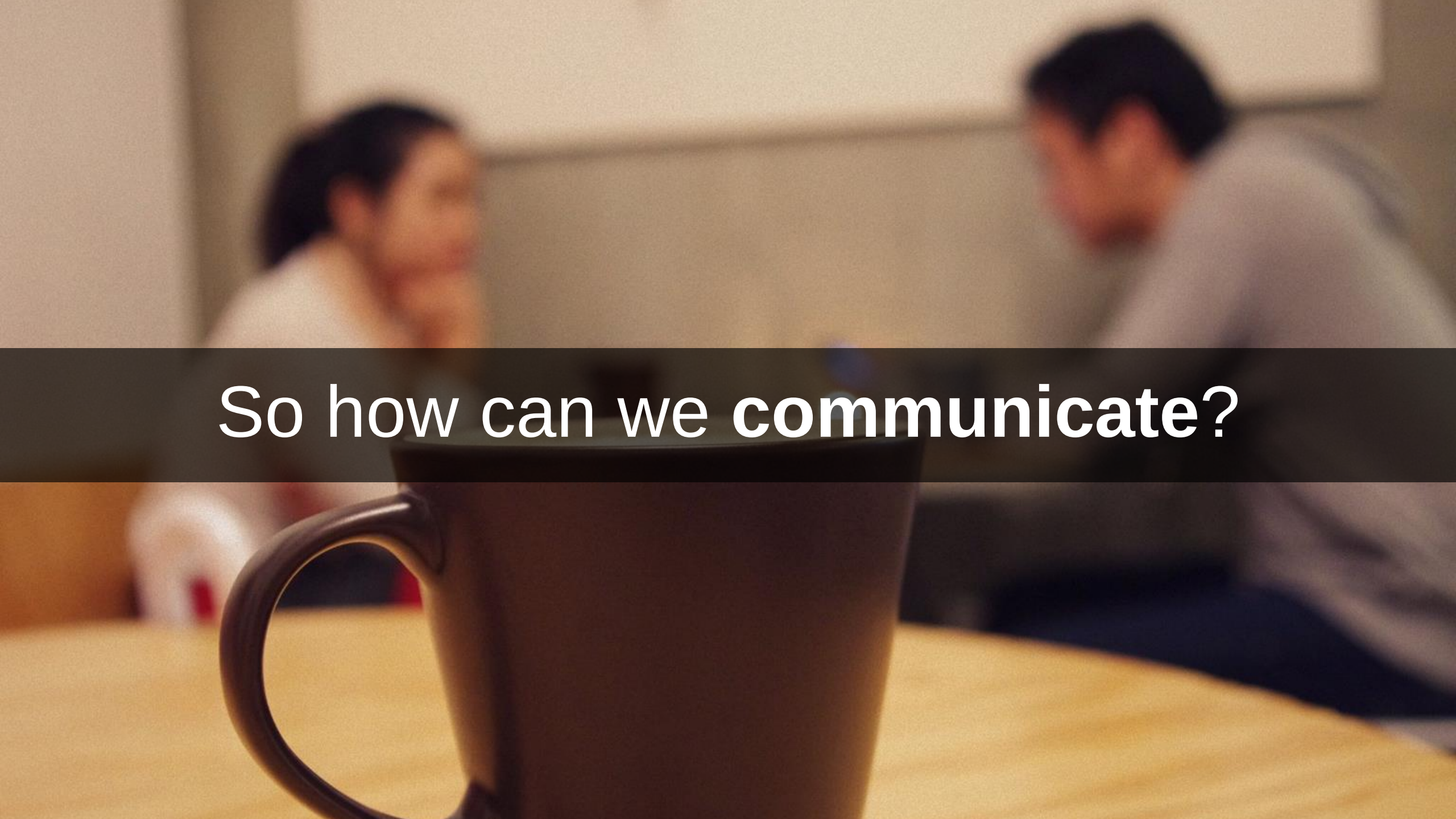
Facts vs. Stories

Embracing the way our minds work


Facts are **more important** than ever.

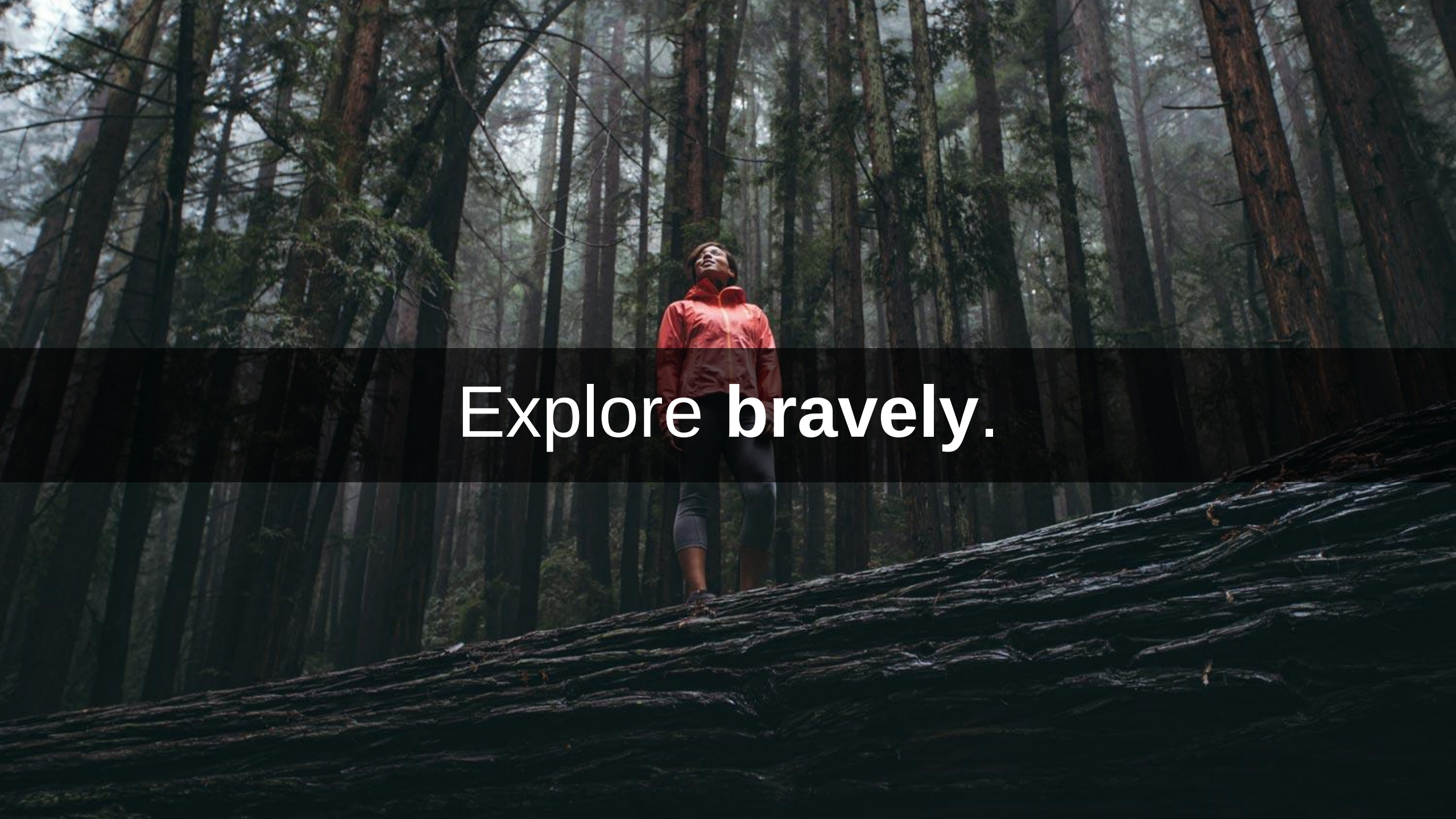

But facts don’t change our minds.
Stories do.

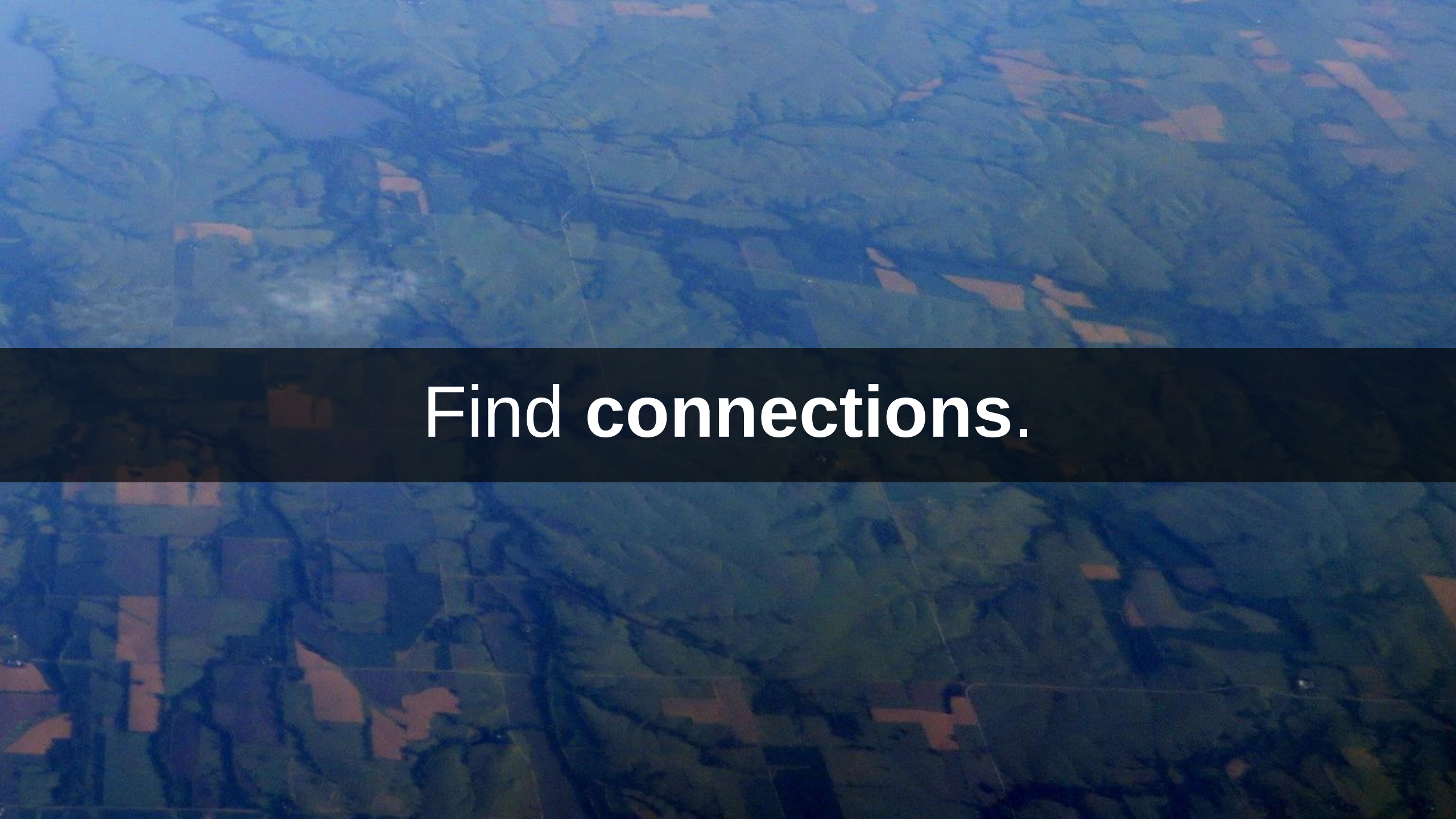

What you say is not what **they hear**.

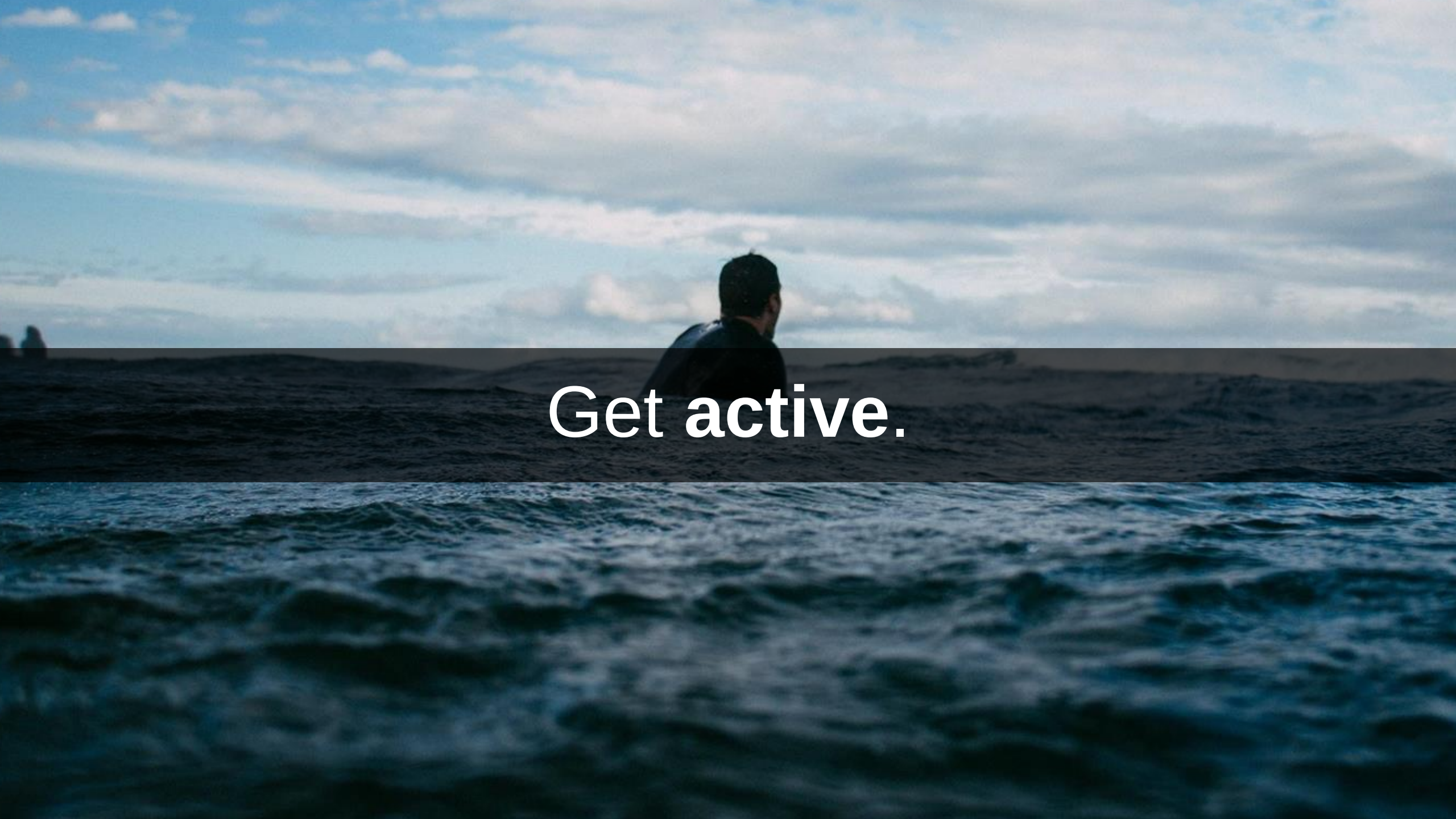

So how can we **communicate**?


Start from **shared knowledge**.


Journey into the unknown **together**.


Explore **bravely**.


Find **connections**.

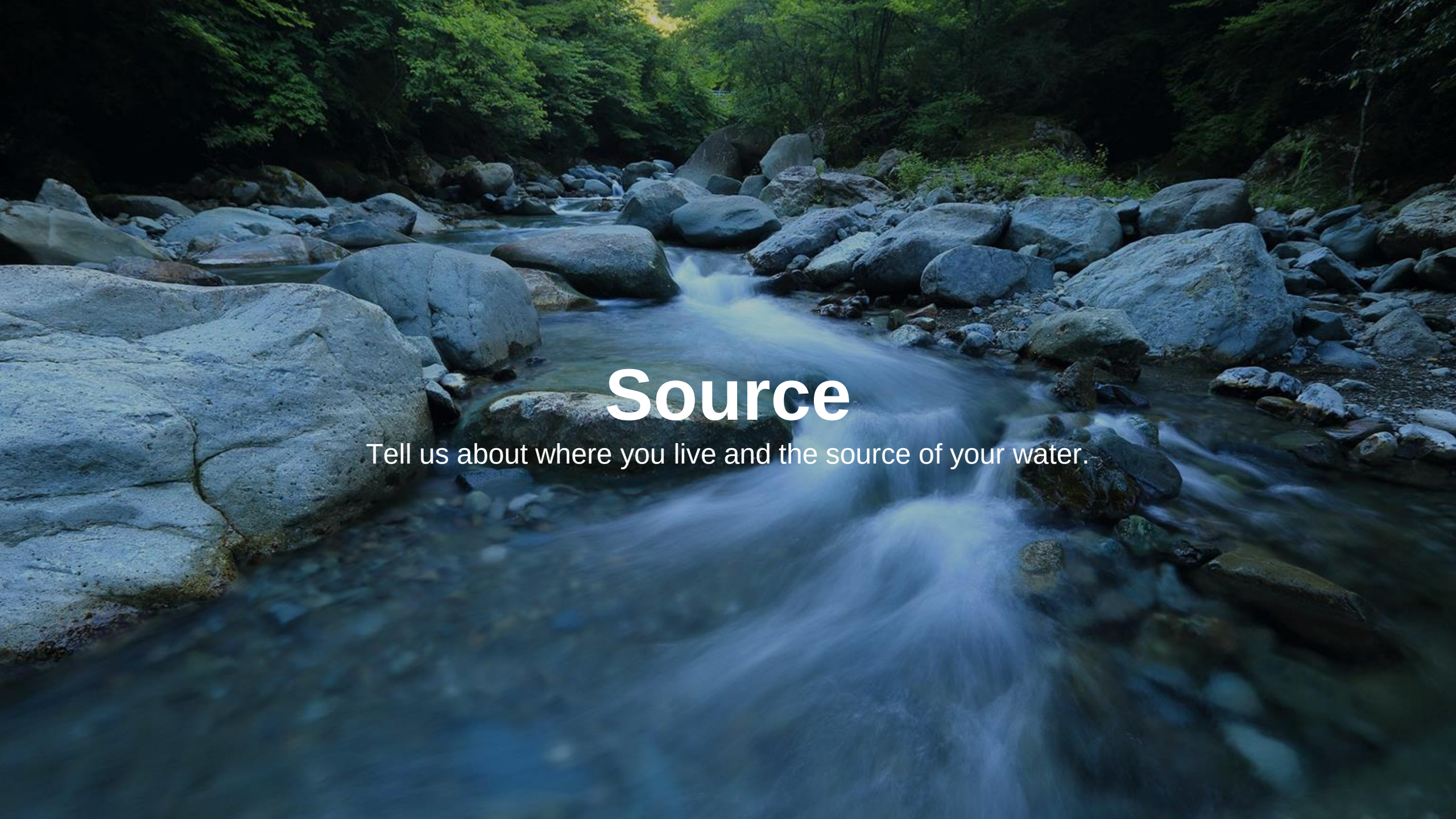

Get **active**.


Stay **curious**.

Freshwater Stories

Activity Guide

Use this guide to prepare your answers,
then enter your information in the activity units below.



Source

Tell us about where you live and the source of your water.

What is the source of drinking water for your home?

Type of water source (lake, river, reservoir, well, aquifer, etc.)

Name of water source (e.g. Lake Michigan)

If you don’t know your water source and the information is not readily available, look up your water utility and see if they post a description of the water source. If not, then give the utility a call or send a message requesting the information.

Have you ever visited your water source?

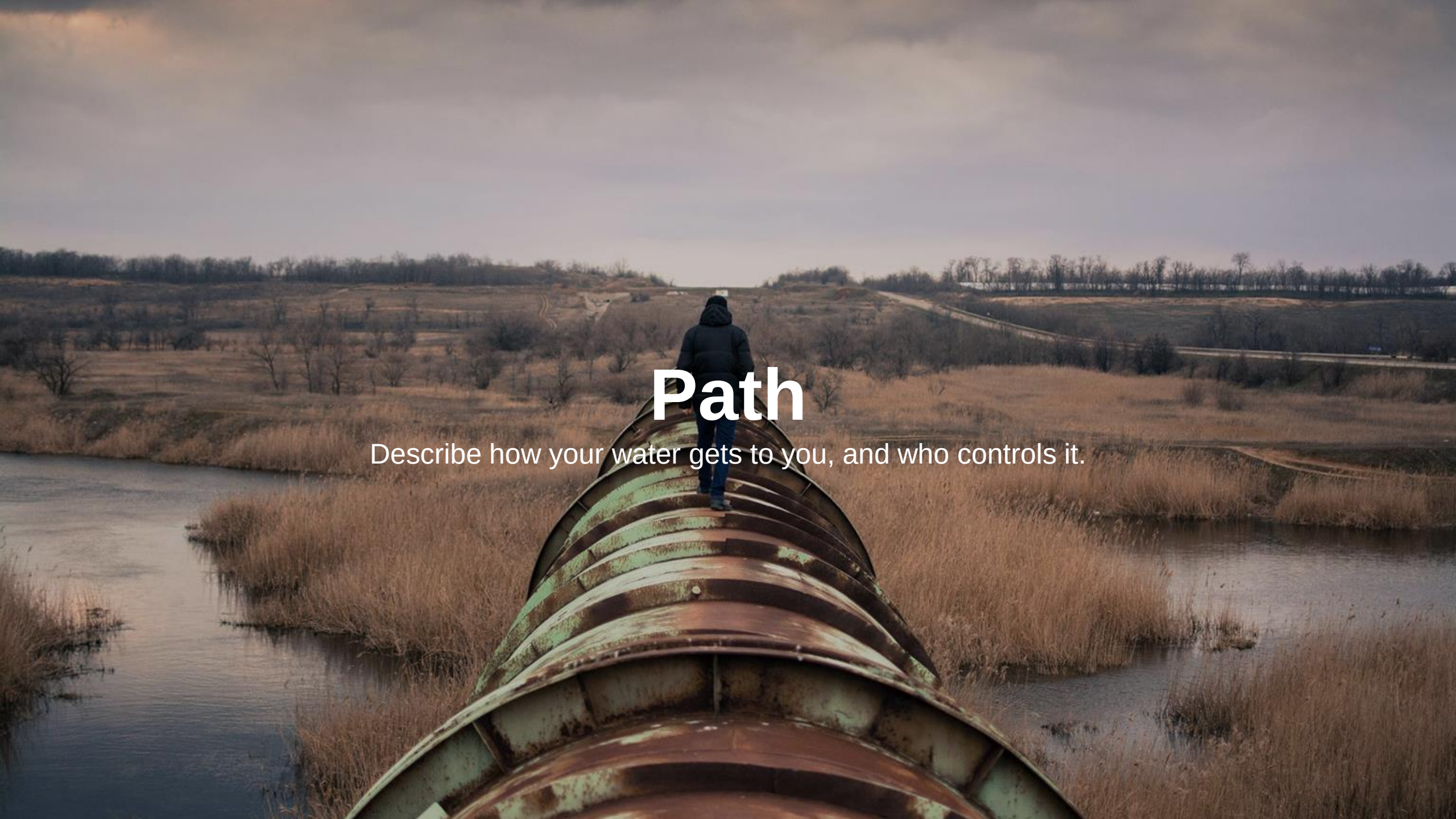
If yes, great!
When was the last time you were there? What did you do?

If not, why not?
Have you ever considered visiting? Is it inaccessible?

Take a picture of a glass of water from your home tap, or a photo of your water source.

Fill a glass of water from your tap and take a photo to upload at freshwaterstories.com, or share a photo of your water source.

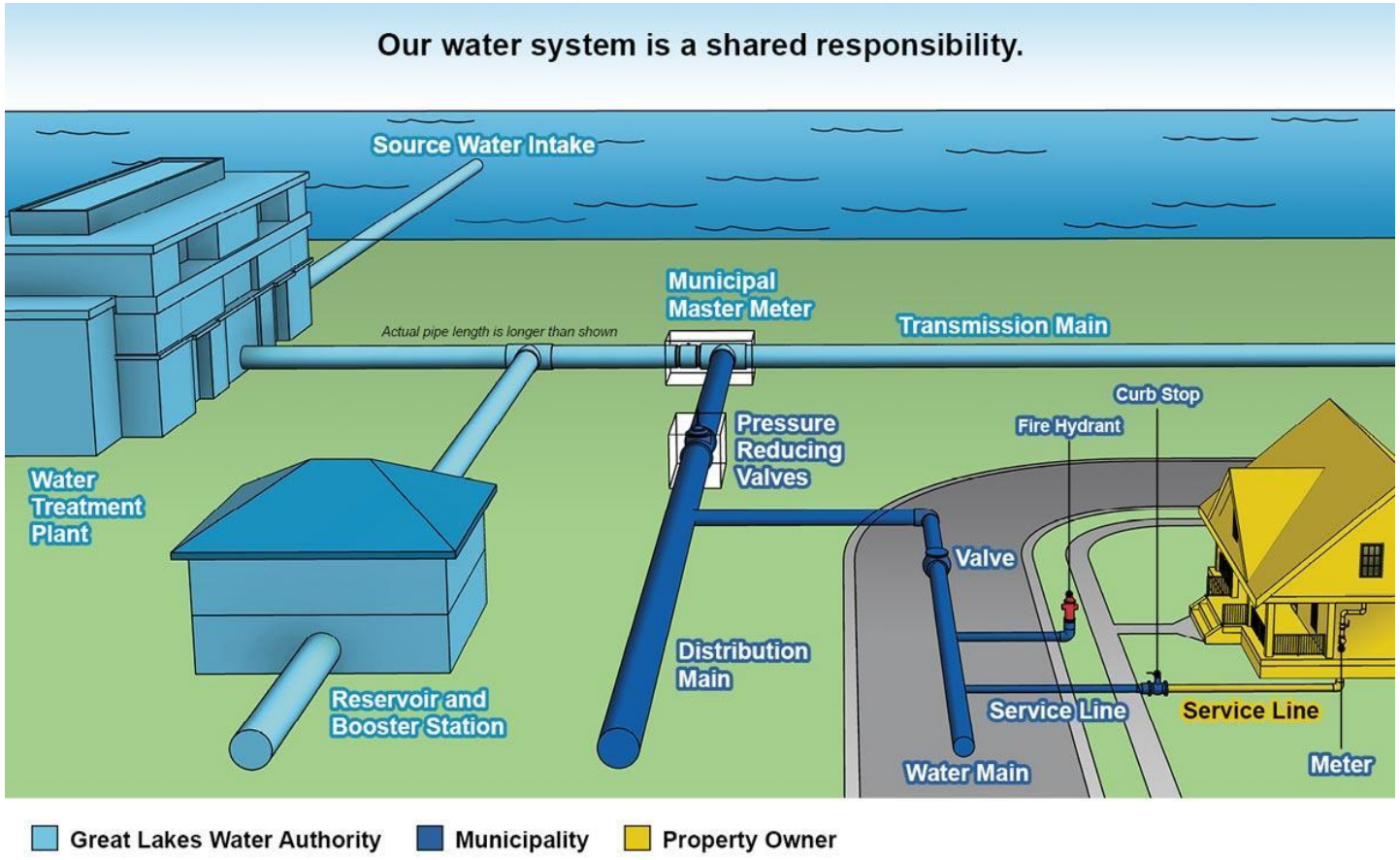
We’ll use these images to create a visual collage of water across the country.



Path

Describe how your water gets to you, and who controls it.

Beneath our feet are a welter of pipes that bring drinking water to our homes and take used water to treatment plants.



These pipes often run alongside gas lines that convey energy. Certain lines are owned and operated by different agencies, all are accountable to you.

Shown here is an example of a typical water system where responsibility is shared among the water authority, municipalities, and property owners.

Source: Great Lakes Water Authority

Who runs the water pipes in your community?

- ❑ City Government
- ❑ County Government
- ❑ Water Utility
- ❑ Private Corporation
- ❑ I Don’t Know
- ❑ Other:

In order to figure out the answer to this question, contact your utility or municipality and ask who runs your water delivery pipes. Be sure to double check if private corporations operate some part of your utility or public water system.

What is the service line that delivers water to your home made of?

- ❑ Lead
- ❑ Copper
- ❑ Steel
- ❑ Clay
- ❑ Concrete
- ❑ PVC
- ❑ I don’t know

Use this tool to help you determine what your service line is made of.

What are the water mains that run along the streets made of?

- ❏ Lead
- ❏ Copper
- ❏ Steel
- ❏ Clay
- ❏ Concrete
- ❏ PVC
- ❏ I don’t know

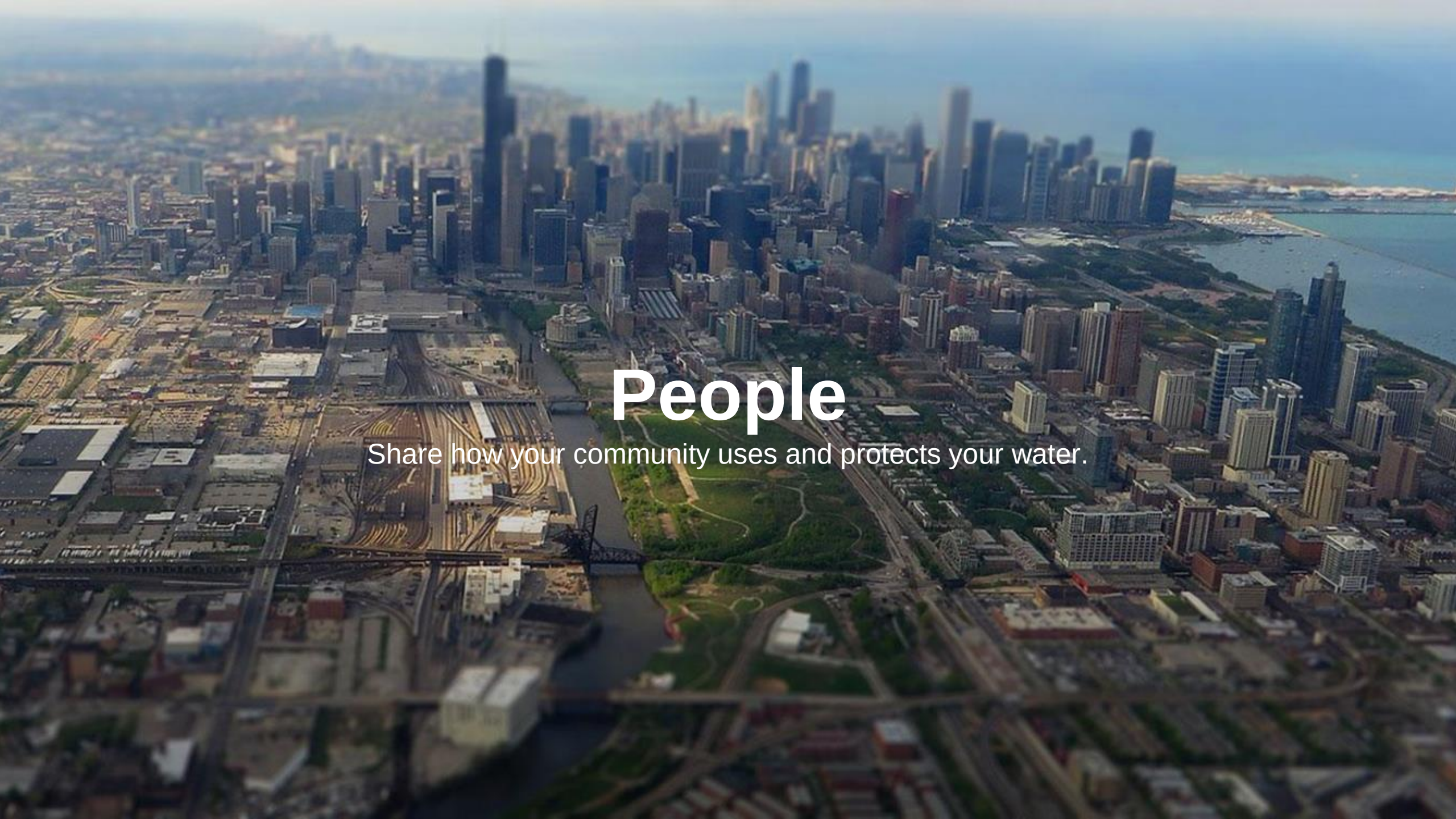
This can be difficult to determine. Cities, towns, and municipalities often lack comprehensive maps, but it’s worth checking if such a map exists for the pipes where you live.

When you see road or pipe work in your neighborhood, stop and ask what is being fixed. When the roads are opened up, you can often see water mains and ask the crew about the exposed pipes. You can also call or send a message to your utility, municipality, or department of public health to ask about your water main.

Can you trace the path of the pipes from your water source to your home?

If yes, please draw or create a map of the path to upload at freshwaterstories.com.

If not, why not? Tell us as much as you can about what you tried and where you ran into difficulty.



People

Share how your community uses and protects your water.

How confident are you that your water is safe to drink?

Rate your confidence in your tap water safety on a scale of 1 (low confidence) to 10 (high confidence).

Have there been any recent or historical health scares related to water in your area?

Answering this question may require an online search, an inquiry to a neighbor, or checking in with your water utility or department of public health.

How was the problem addressed?

What are the greatest risks to your water system?

On Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes in general, these risks include toxic algae blooms from fertilizer and sewage runoff, industrial waste, oil pipelines and refineries, waste from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), storage of nuclear materials, etc.

The Environmental Working Group's tap water database can help you to identify some of the risks to your water system.

In what neighborhood or community are these risks most acute? Who is most affected?

You can approach this question by checking where water has been shut off due to billing or pollution. You can also track it down by investigating where water has been compromised and who lives closest to the source of contamination.

The EJ Screen tool is a good place to start.

Who in your community is working on these risks? What are they doing, and how can you help?

As we discuss in our Environmental Justice story, if you're worried about an environmental or public health issue, chances are there's a group organized around it in the community most affected.

In the Great Lakes region, you can connect with our partner organizations listed below.

Congratulations!

You've reached the end of the guide.

Now **enter your answers** in the activity units below.