

# Water, Water Everywhere

Quantity is not the problem, but quality is.

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

**S**tephen H. Born is a professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the UW-Madison. He has chaired that department as well as the graduate degree programs in water resources management in the university's Institute for Environmental Studies. Raised in Chicago, Born has become a freshwater expert by studying not only water in all its forms, but the magical trout that dwell in some of it. His association with the UW-Madison began in 1969 and continues, some faculty friends say, because of the campus' proximity to Black Earth Creek, a brown trout fishery of national reputation. Born fishes the creek regularly when he's not fishing Montana.

"Despite the drought of recent years,

this country does not have a water shortage. What I'm saying is, there's no shortage in volume of water, but there is a shortage in quality of water.

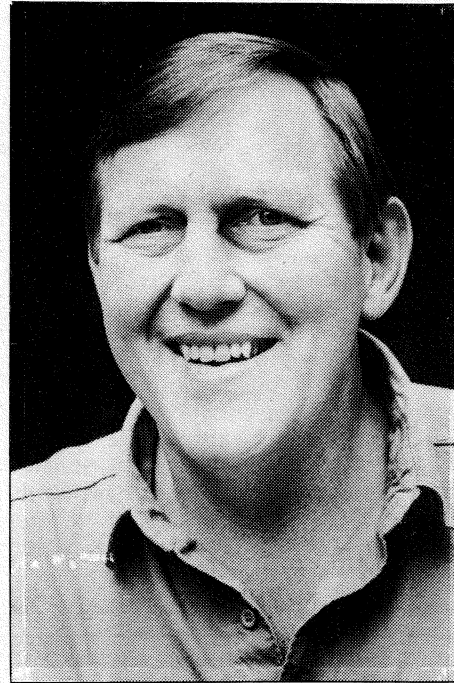
"When you have impairment of water quality—pollution—it begins limiting the amount of water available to you. Green Bay is a good example. The amount of water in the bay, the



volume, is still what it has been for thousands of years, but we know that there are now toxic chemicals in that bay, so the quality of that water has been decreased.

"The same thing happens when groundwater supplies are contaminated—the amount of usable water, for drinking, for recreation, is decreased. There's an interrelationship between water quality and water quantity.

"Let me go a step further on that. One of the biggest failures in the United



BRENT NICASTRO

**Stephen Born: Water management is irrational and crisis-oriented.**

States is our tendency to deal with little parts of the problem—one piece at a time.

"Bureaucracies are organized to compartmentalize the problem. I call it 'hardening of the categories.'

"You go into a state agency and there will be one unit that's dealing with lakes. Another unit is dealing with wetlands. Another unit is dealing with landfills. Another deals with waste water. And yet another unit deals with fish.

"Well, hell, the whole system is connected! The system doesn't know that it's been Balkanized and chopped up for the bureaucracy. We manage these little parts of the water problem and we don't do holistic basin-wide management. We don't take into consideration all these interdependencies, these interrelationships, these interactions. So what we wind up with is always a pretty clumsy effort.

"That's bad enough, but then you have to superimpose on that the multiple local jurisdictions that come into play when you deal with the environment.