

# dubuque

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## Seeking to change perceptions about water

**An architect explains the 'Net-Zero Water' concept — capturing and recycling water on site for reuse — at the Growing Sustainable Communities conference.**

**BY ANDY PIPER**  
*TH staff writer • apiper@wcinet.com*

The public perception of water is elemental: It rains, we turn on the faucet and water comes out.

"There is not a lot of understanding of the process," said Jeffrey Bruce, a landscape architect

who hopes to take the relationship between water, humans and the planet to a new level.

It's called "Net-Zero Water" and Bruce explained the concept at the welcoming reception of the Growing Sustainable Communities conference Tuesday at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium.

It's not science fiction. Bruce said four buildings in the U.S. are Net-Zero certified, meaning they have the infrastructure to harvest, capture and recycle water on site



**Jeffrey Bruce**

for reuse.

"We worked on the Gates Foundation in Seattle, and they are capturing all of the water on site," Bruce said. "They are reusing it in their fountains, for landscaping, cooling of the building and in storage they are pulling heat pumps through it and creating energy. They attacked it in numerous ways."

On the banks of the Mississippi River and atop an underground aquifer, Dubuque citizens don't worry much about water. In other parts of the U.S., however, it is becoming a serious concern as population growth in the Southwest



**Ian Fitzgibbon**

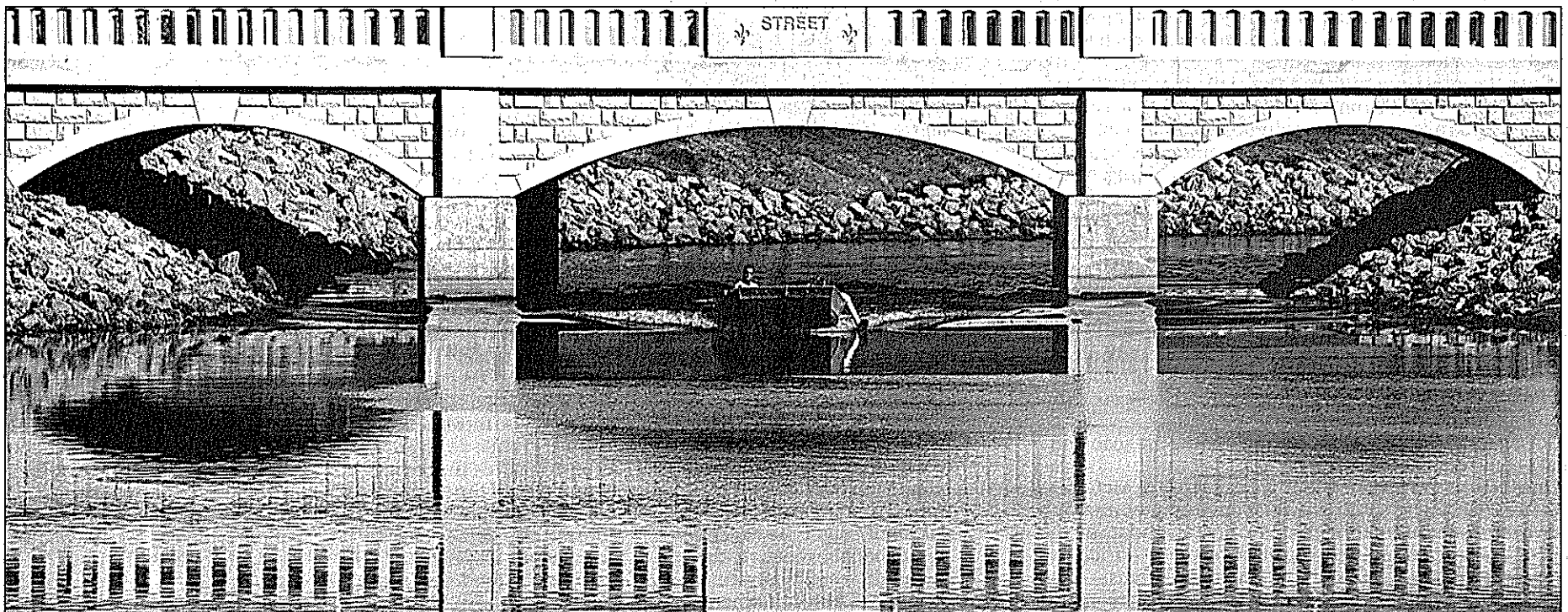
and arid conditions are straining resources.

"There is no water shortage in the desert unless we build a city there," Bruce quipped. "Nature has determined the balance between the water systems and eco-systems, and we come in and disrupt that. We need to fit ourselves into that process."

Ian Fitzgibbon, a sustainability fellow from Warnambool, Victoria, Australia, is visiting Dubuque as part of an international exchange program. Australia, he said, is the

second-driest continent behind only Antarctica. He said his city has two significant water projects under way. One subdivision has a rainwater collection system built into it and the residents derive much of their drinking water through it. The other captures stormwater for use in irrigation and then injects it back into the groundwater system.

"Water is a priority issue in Australia," Fitzgibbon said. "We have plenty in Warnambool, so we can get complacent just like I suppose you can here in Dubuque, but water management is something we all need to think about."



## Creek cruising

Jeff Davis, of D&D Superior Concrete, cruises along the Bee Branch Creek on Tuesday in Dubuque. D&D crews were painting the sides of the bridges along the creek.

**JEREMY PORTJE • Telegraph Herald**