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Desalted ocean water may meet nation's critical water needs

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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Desalted ocean water may meet nation's critical water needs" (1969). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 4438.
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IMMEDIATELY

stewart/forestry/nw
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local and west mont

DESALTED OCEAN WATER MAY MEET
NATION'S CRITICAL WATER NEEDS

MISSOULA, MONTANA----

Desalting oceanic and other saline water offers an alternative solution to meet the nation's increasingly critical need for fresh water, Milt Sachs reported Wednesday.

Sachs, program analyzer for the Office of Saline Water, Washington, D.C., spoke in the eighth University of Montana School of Forestry lecture on the water problems of the Pacific Northwest.

Sachs said that the thirstiest regions in the United States--California, Great Basin (Utah-Nevada), Upper and Lower Colorado, Rio Grande, and Texas Gulf--already demand more water than their average annual runoff provides.

Desalination has been tried in a number of areas of the world and by and large, Sachs said, the experiments have been successful. He noted that desalting for irrigation purposes even offers promise, if the costs can be effectively reduced.

Current desalting plants number 620 in the world, of which 288 are located in the United States. The 288 plants in the U.S. produce 40 million gallons of water a day, but only 23 plants in Kuwait produce 43 million gallons of fresh water daily.

The cost of desalting water is steadily diminishing, primarily because plants are much larger and more efficient.

Sachs said technology still had to solve waste problems; how can we dispose of the extra heat and brine?