

Few public interests are more obvious, indisputable, and independent of particular theory than the interest of the public of a state to maintain the rivers that are wholly within it substantially undiminished, except by such drafts upon them as the guardians of the public welfare may permit for the purpose of turning them to more perfect use. This public interest is omnipresent wherever there is a state, and grows more pressing as population grows .... The private right to appropriate is subject not only to the rights of lower owners, but to the initial limitation that it may not substantially diminish one of the great foundations of public welfare and health.

> U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in Hudson County Water Co. v. McCarter, 1908