



# H2O mx

A film by José Cohen  
An Icarus Films Release

“A rallying cry for government and collective action, *H2Omx* is a good-looking, well-researched and smartly assembled documentary that makes a persuasive case that the time is nigh to remedy the status of water management in the Valley of Mexico.”

–*Variety*

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Can a mega-city mobilize its 22 million citizens to become water-sustainable?

Mexico City does not have its own water supply. Supplying the city with fresh water from other regions and states each day and caring for sewage is a herculean task. José Cohen's powerful documentary *H2O mx* is an environmental case study of the Valley of Mexico as the city struggles to save itself even as its population grows daily.

## **SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS**

North American Premiere

Margaret Mead Film Festival, American Museum of Natural History

Official Selection, Morelia Film Festival

Official Selection, Guadalajara International Film Festival

Official Selection, Cinema Planeta International Environmental Film Festival

Official Selection, Filmfest Hamburg

Sneak Preview, Philip Glass' Days And Nights Festival

Official Selection, Festival Internacional de Cinema del Medi Ambient (FICMA)

Official Selection, Cinema Verite Iran International Documentary Film Festival

Official Selection, CPH:DOX

## IN THE PRESS



October 26, 2013 By Alissa Simon

*This well-researched, smartly assembled documentary makes a persuasive case on behalf of responsible water management.*

A rallying cry for government and collective action, "H2Omx" is a good-looking, well-researched and smartly assembled documentary that makes a persuasive case that the time is nigh to remedy the status of water management in the Valley of Mexico. Raising awareness a la "An Inconvenient Truth," the crusading pic employs dramatic aerial photography, easily assimilated statistics presented via eye-catching graphics and animation, and the testimony of experts and ordinary people. With the support of global financial institution HSBC, which is making water sustainability its main issue, this excellent educational tool should be screened widely at home and abroad.

The docu highlights the numerous aspects of the region's water problem, many of which stem from the fact that Mexico City was built in the middle of a series of ancient lakes. The Spanish colonists fought against nature, building massive drainage systems and importing fresh water from elsewhere; these same outdated tactics are currently in use today. Unfortunately, continuing land subsidence and the lack of a natural drainage outlet make the area vulnerable to destructive flooding as water flows from the mountainside. Moreover, the regions from which the fresh water is being siphoned resent the loss of their natural resource.

Many new urban neighborhoods in the sprawling megalopolis lack access to running water. Private vendors provide expensive deliveries. In poorer and more remote areas where water is delivered in bulk, some families spend untold hours each week carting home plastic receptacles of potable water.

Among those with access to running water, most don't give much thought to its life cycle. Alarmingly, greater Mexico City is served by a single combined sewer

system that collects municipal wastewater, industrial wastewater and storm water.

This sewer system dumps into a drainage canal that snakes from the city through the countryside into Hidalgo state. Some of the film's most fearsome visuals show the canal as a toxic, stinking eyesore that pollutes the groundwater, farmers' crops and fisherman's catches. Sometimes the wind catches a mutant cloud of foam (detergent content is not regulated) arising from the canal and sends it bouncing over the surrounding fields.

With no other source of irrigation, the Hidalgo farmers must use it for their crops. They call it "the river of revenge." "The city sends us their poop," one farmer comments wryly, "but we send it back with our produce."

Certainly, government regulation and resources must be applied to the problem, but an educated populace can also help. We witness the work of Isla Urbana, an organization founded by industrial designer Enrique Lomnitz and civil engineer David Vargas to harvest rainwater. Isla Urbana goes into local communities and trains plumbers in each neighborhood to install the rainwater-harvesting systems, building a pool of local knowledge to deal with any problems that may arise. They also support the local economy by purchasing materials from neighborhood hardware stores.

Per producer Alejandra Liceaga, the three-years-in-the-making pic took two years longer than expected. A well-known director was on board to helm at the beginning, but had to move on to other projects. The producers agreed not to list a director credit.

Tech credits are first-rate. In addition to the breathtaking cinematography, the expressive electronica score (by Ariel Guzik and the Laboratorio de Investigacion en Resonancia y Expression de la Naturaleza) adds to the theatrical experience. Final credits include numerous suggestions of ways to preserve water and resources for taking collective action.

## FILM CREDITS

Film Title: *H2Omx*  
Country of Production: Mexico  
Year of Production: 2013  
Year of Release: 2014  
Feature version running time: 82 minutes  
Short version running time: 51 minutes  
Language: Spanish with English subtitles  
Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1, Stereo

Director: José Cohen  
in collaboration with: Lorenzo Hagerman  
Producer: Alejandra Liceaga  
Co-Producers: Fernando Hernández and Jaime Cohen  
Executive Producer: José Cohen  
Writer: Ólga Cáceres

Editors: Paula Heredia, Omar Guzmán, Lorenzo Hagerman

Cinematographers: Bernabé Salinas, Guillermo "Memo" Rosas, Jaime Reynoso, Sylvestre Guidi, Gaetan Mariage

With: Homero Aridjis, Teresa Rojas Rabiela, Jose Miguel Guevara, Israel Saavedra, Andrea Belen Martin, Vecinos de Col. Bosques, Juan Carolos Rivera. Israel Martinez, Felipe Ochoa Rosso, Arnold Ricalde, Antonio Gutierrez Marcos, Jose Manuel Melendez, Antonio Capella Vizcaino, Enrique Lomnitz, David Vargas, Daniela Gutierrez, Jose Roberto Lopez, Federico Mooser Hawtree, Guillermo Ortega, Samatha Peralta, Patricia Morales Martinez, Carlos Ramos, Ignacio Barrera.

Music: Laboratorio de Investigación en Resonancia y Expresión de la Naturaleza, A.C.

Additional music: Ariel Guzik and Javier Alvarez  
Sound: Samuel Larson  
Production Company: CactusFilm and Video  
Official Production Website: [www.h2o.mx](http://www.h2o.mx)





*H20 mx*

A film by José Cohen / 2013 / NR / 82 minutes  
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