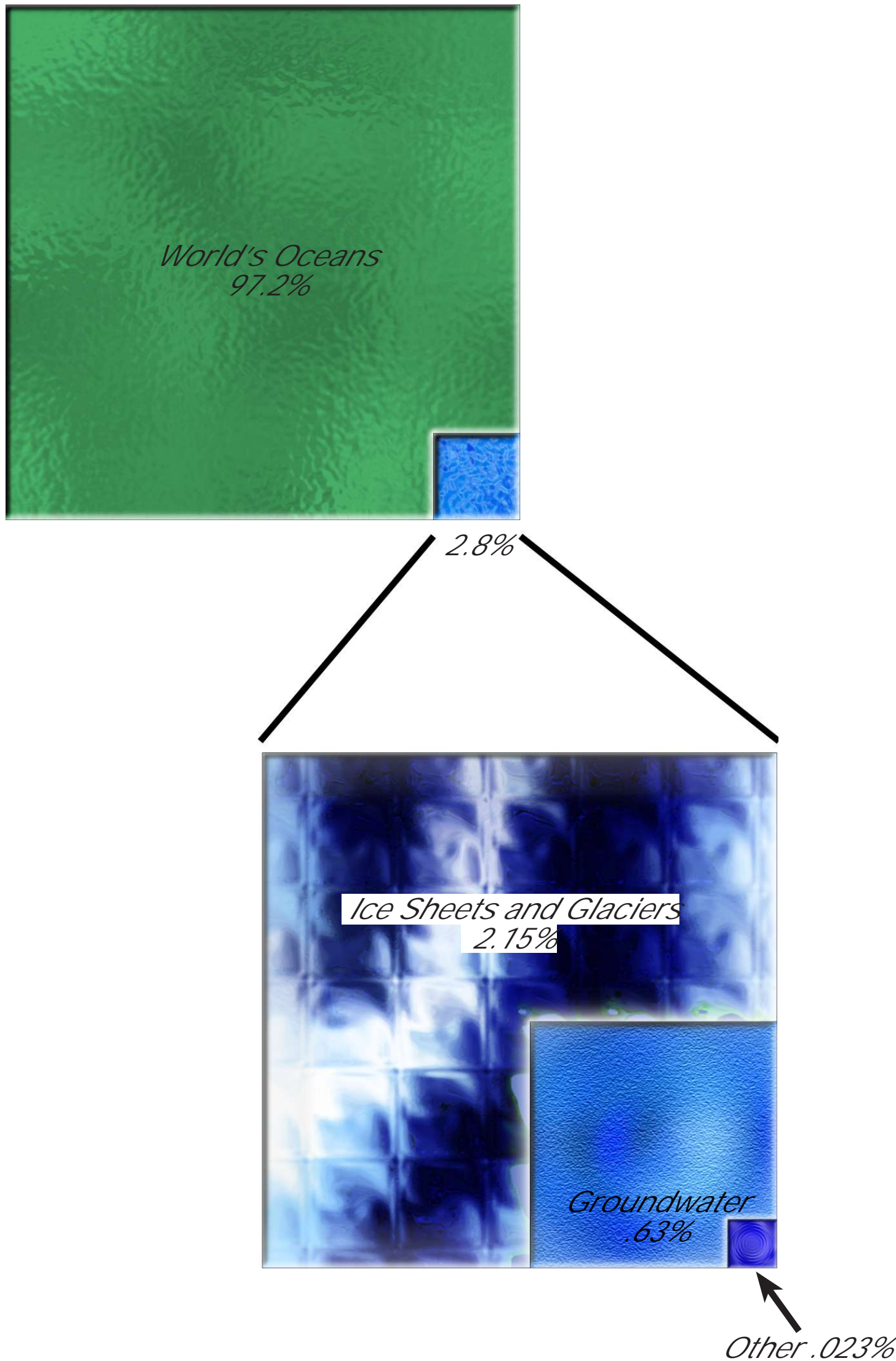


# Distribution of the Earth's Water

Seventy-one percent of the Earth's surface is covered by water. This may cause you to ask, "If there is so much water, why are people so concerned about protecting it?" First, all of the Earth's systems interact, so to keep one part of the Earth healthy, we need to keep all parts healthy. Second, fresh water is essential for all life and it makes up only a small part of all the Earth's water supply.



Of all the Earth's water, only 2.8 percent is fresh, potable water. Of this already small amount, approximately 77 percent is locked in ice sheets and glaciers, and therefore is not readily available for human use. The tiny remaining portion of the Earth's water, .65 percent, is located in lakes and rivers, and underground. This brings us to the main topic of this display. Ninety-seven percent of the world's fresh, usable, water is groundwater.



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