

SIERRA CLUB POLICY ON WATER PRIVATIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION

Water is a public resource, not a commodity. Public policy must ensure the sustainability of safe water supplies for the benefit of all people and the natural environment.

All water resources, including the oceans, must be protected as a public trust so that commercial use of water does not diminish public or ecological benefits.

Access to clean, sufficient, and affordable drinking water is a human right necessary for human health and survival. This right must be protected by government policies and international agencies, consistent with ensuring access to safe and adequate quantities of water resources for all wildlife on the planet and sustainability of these resources.

For the full policy, go to www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/commodification.asp



To learn more and get involved in the Sierra Club's bottled water campaign, visit:
www.sierraclub.org/cac/water

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Avoid using bottled water unless absolutely necessary.

Drink from reusable metal or glass containers filled with tap water when you are traveling.

At public events and at home, offer pitchers of water.

Ask your municipality not to provide bottled water, except in emergencies.

Talk to your favorite restaurants about not offering bottled water.

Protect water as a commons in your community by banning corporations from taking water for sale in bottles or for other commercial sales.

Help ensure that good quality tap water is available to everyone in your community at an affordable price.

Advocate for adequate funding and good public management of municipal water systems. For information about your local drinking water, go to www.epa.gov/saewater/dwinfo.htm

Join with Sierra Club to advocate for strict state and local groundwater laws to protect aquifers and other water resources and to protect our rivers, streams, and wetlands from pollution to assure high quality public water supplies.

Sierra Club
Corporate Accountability Committee
Water Privatization Task Force



85 Second St., Second Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441
www.sierraclub.org

April 2008



Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

Bottled Water

Learning the Facts and Taking Action



John Byrne Barry

The bottled water industry, led by Nestlé, Coca Cola, and Pepsi Cola, is aggressively promoting bottled water. In the U.S., more than 30 billion plastic water bottles end up as garbage or litter each year. Most don't get recycled. The bottles take up to 1,000 years to decompose and contribute to the vast vortex of plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean, which is harming wildlife.

The withdrawal of large quantities of water from springs and aquifers for bottling has depleted household wells in rural areas, damaged wetlands, and degraded lakes. It takes 3 liters of water to produce 1 liter of bottled water.

Consumers don't realize they are needlessly contributing to global warming. There are alternatives!

Bottled Water

Learning the Facts and Taking Action

TOXICITY

In 2006, more than 900,000 tons of plastic was used to package 8 billion gallons of bottled water. Production of this plastic leads to the release of a variety of chemicals. Most smaller bottles are made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which generates more than 100 times more toxic emissions than an equivalent amount of glass (Berkeley Ecology Center).

In 2000, Consumer Reports found that “eight of the ten 5-gallon jugs we checked left residues of the endocrine disrupter, bisphenol A, in the water.” An expert panel of scientists has concluded that exposure to extremely low doses of bisphenol A is strongly linked to diseases such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, and diabetes, and to reproductive and neurological development.

Leaching of chemicals into the bottled water increases with heat and age, raising concern about storage and transportation of the bottles. More research is needed on leaching of harmful chemicals from all types of bottles. No problems have been associated with refillable stainless steel or aluminum/baked enamel lined containers.

WATER QUALITY

Bottled water is regulated by the FDA, which has weaker regulations than the EPA regulations for tap water. Bottled water sold within states is regulated only by state agencies.

When NRDC tested more than 1,000 bottles including 103 bottled water brands, they found contamination exceeding allowable limits in at least one sample from about one-third of the brands, including arsenic, synthetic organics, and bacteria.

AWASH IN PLASTIC BOTTLES

In 2005, 28 billion bottles of water were sold, mostly in PET containers, according to the Container Recycling Institute. In 2004, the last year for which data is available, 85 percent of all non-carbonated PET bottles ended up in landfills, or as litter in parks and along roadways--that's 24 billion empty water bottles--66 million every day!

REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

The Pacific Institute estimates that production of bottled water for U.S. consumption in 2006 required the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil, not including the energy used for transportation. This released over 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide, a major global warming gas.

More energy is used to transport the water to the bottling plant, then transport the filled bottles to warehouses, stores, homes, and finally to landfills or recycling centers.

The total amount of energy embedded in the use of bottled water is the equivalent of filling a plastic bottle one quarter full of oil, according to the Pacific Institute.

By contrast, municipal water requires only a little energy to pump the water through pipes to our homes. So just saying NO to bottled water is a simple way to reduce our carbon footprint.



Barb Williams

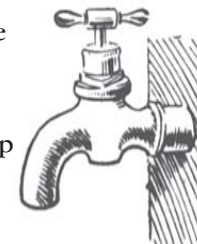
**Reduce your carbon footprint.
Just say NO to bottled water!**

COST OF BOTTLED WATER

The bottled water industry promotes bottled water as a healthy, trendy drink, without mentioning that it can cost 500 to 4,000 times more than tap water.

The Sierra Club believes that all people should have access to affordable, clean drinking water. This means protecting water sources and adequate funding for upgrading municipal systems should be national priorities.

If you are concerned about the quality or taste of your tap water, it is much cheaper to install a water filter on your tap to remove the pollutants than to depend on bottled water.



GLOBAL CORPORATE THREAT

Bottled water corporations treat water as a private commodity from which to profit by selling water at the market price, rather than as a human right that must be universally available at prices all people can afford.

Having created a growing market for bottled water, transnational corporations are exercising their power to secure access to springs, aquifers, and municipal water supplies to keep their profits flowing.

Nestlé has taken over many small, independent companies, set up much larger operations at local springs, and is aggressively pursuing new sites around the United States. Coke's Dasani and Pepsi's Aquafina brands depend on cheap municipal water in the United States. Coke's bottled water operation in India is embroiled in controversy, where a “Boycott Coke” campaign is underway.