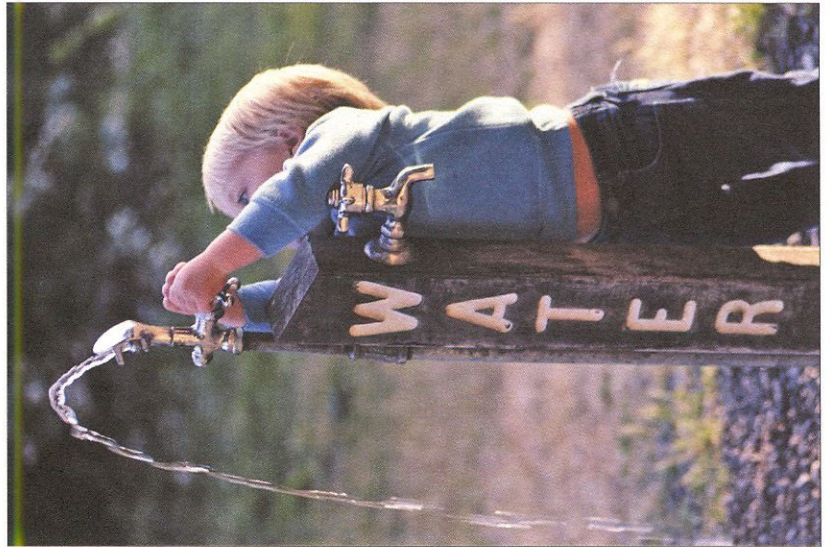


SIERRA CLUB POLICY ON
WATER PRIVATIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION

- 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



PHOTODISC

Sierra Club Corporate Accountability Committee Water Privatization Task Force

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



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Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

Bottled Water

Learning the Facts and Taking Action



JOHN BYRNE BARRY

IMPACTS TO ECOSYSTEMS AND WATER RESOURCES

Although bottled water may be needed in emergencies such as when local drinking water is contaminated, the bottled water industry, led by Nestlé, Coca Cola, and Pepsi Cola, is aggressively promoting non-essential uses of bottled water. The withdrawal of large quantities of water from springs and aquifers for bottling has depleted household wells in rural areas, damaged wetlands, and degraded aquifers. In the United States alone, more than 10 billion plastic water bottles end up as garbage or litter each year.

Bottled Water

Learning the Facts and Taking Action

AWASH IN PLASTIC BOTTLES

Unnecessary consumption of drinking water in plastic bottles is wasteful and damaging to the environment.

Waste: Millions of plastic bottles are not recycled and end up in landfills, in parks and along roadways. Nine out of ten plastic water bottles end up as garbage or litter. That's 30 million discarded plastic bottles each day—more than 10 billion a year. Large amounts of energy is consumed in manufacture, transportation, and recycling of the bottles.

Toxicity: In 2002, 1.5 million tons of plastic was used to package 6 billion gallons of bottled water. The production of this plastic leads to the release of a variety of chemicals. Most smaller bottles are made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) which, according to the Berkeley Ecology Center, generates more than 100 times more toxic emissions than an equivalent amount of glass.

Leaching of chemicals into the water is also a concern. "Eight of the ten 5-gallon jugs we checked left residues of the endocrine disrupter, bisphenol A, in the water." (Consumer Reports 8/00). Exposure to extremely low doses of bisphenol A is strongly linked to the growth of cancerous mammary tumors in mice. Leaching increases with heat and age, raising concern about storage and transportation of the bottles. No problems have been associated with refillable stainless steel or aluminum/baked enamel lined containers.

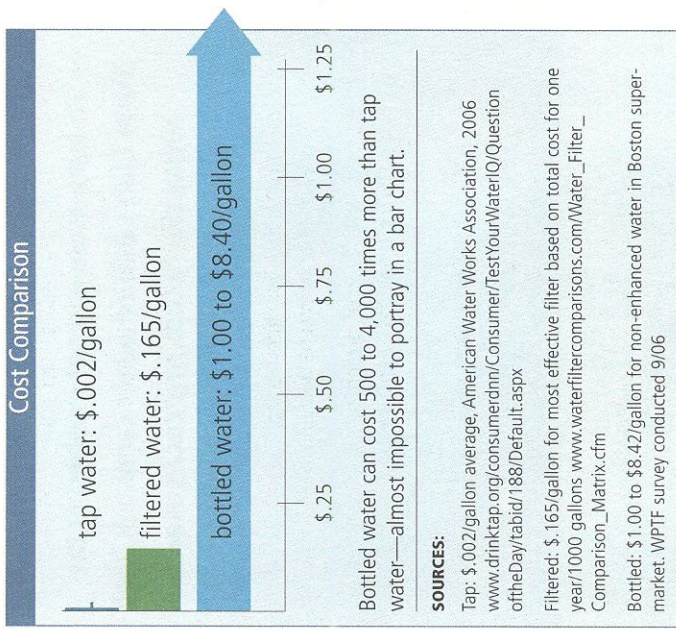
WATER QUALITY

Bottled water is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, which has weaker regulations than the EPA regulations for tap water. ("What's in that Bottle?" Consumer Reports 1/03.) Bottled water sold within states is regulated only by state agencies.

NRDC tested more than 1,000 bottles of 103 brands of bottled water. They found contamination exceeding allowable limits in at least one sample from about one-third of the brands, including synthetic organics, bacteria, and arsenic. www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/bwbwinx.asp

COST OF BOTTLED WATER

The bottled water industry promotes bottled water as a healthy, trendy drink, without mentioning that it can cost up to 4,000 times as much as tap water. The Sierra Club believes that all people should have access to affordable, clean drinking water. This means protecting water sources and funding for upgrading municipal systems should be a national priority. 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.

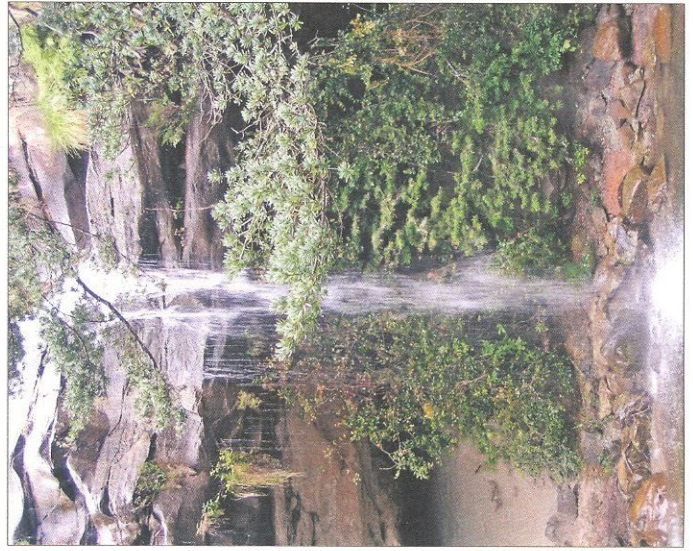


GLOBAL CORPORATE THREAT

Having created a growing market for bottled water, transnational corporations are exercising their power to get access to springs, aquifers, and municipal water supplies to keep their profits flowing, with little regard for the environmental impacts of large water withdrawals. 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.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Avoid using bottled water unless absolutely necessary.
- Use reusable stainless steel containers and carry tap water with you when traveling.
- At public events and at home, offer pitchers of water.
- Protect water as a commons in your community by banning corporations from taking water for sale in bottles.
- Advocate for strict state and local groundwater laws to protect aquifers and other water resources.
- Ensure that good quality tap water is available for everyone in your community at an affordable price.
- Advocate for adequate funding and good public management of municipal water systems.
- Research the quality of your public drinking water. For consumer confidence reports, go to www.epa.gov/safewater/ccrl.html. For information about your local drinking water, go to www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm
- Join with Sierra Club in protecting our rivers, streams, and wetlands from pollution to assure high quality public water supplies.



RICHARD CELLARIUS