

## **Bottled Water Is a Big Drain**

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***Most communities in the U.S. have safe tap water. Bottled H2O is a waste of money and resources. Pro or con?***

### **Pro: Hello, You Have a Faucet**

By Mark DiMassimo and Eric Yaverbaum, Tapping.com

When you buy single-serve bottles of water, your money is actually purchasing water regulated less than tap, plus advertising. For that, you'll pay more than three times for H<sub>2</sub>O what you pay for gasoline—\$12 per gallon.

Single-serving bottled water costs up to 4,000 times as much as tap. It's not only the cost, of course, that's the problem. Cities must filter and disinfect tap, which comes from surface water. No federal filtration or disinfection requirements exist for bottled water.

City water systems must issue "right to know" reports about what's in the water. Bottlers successfully killed this requirement for bottled water. Up to 70% of bottled water is unregulated by the Food & Drug Administration because it never crosses state lines for sale, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. So there may be a health cost, too.

Tap water is a local product that needs no packaging. Globally, bottled water accounts for as many as 1.5 million tons of plastic waste annually, according to the Sierra Club. Making the plastic in the bottles requires 47 million gallons of oil annually. And that doesn't include the jet fuel and gasoline required to transport the bottles—sometimes halfway around the world.

In addition, billions of bottles end up in the ground every year. Sadly, only 20% ever get recycled, according to the Container Recycling Institute. The other 80%? Besides landfills, many bottles end up in oceans, posing a risk to marine life. By purchasing bottled water, you're indirectly raising the price of gasoline and contributing to global climate change.

In 2007, the manufacturers of plastic water bottles generated more than 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions and required the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil, according to the Pacific Institute.

Americans drank more than 30 billion single-serving bottles of water last year. Yet the vast majority of us have an unlimited source of clean, EPA-regulated tap water flowing from our faucets. The recent scare tactics—reports of pharmaceutical drug traces being found in tap water—from the \$100 billion bottled water industry don't ring true. Until recently, the only thing tap water was missing was cool marketing and an awesome image. Problem solved.

**Con: It's Not Either/Or**

By Joseph K. Doss, International Bottled Water Association

Bottled water is a healthful, convenient food product. Attempts to turn this matter into a “bottled water vs. tap water debate” misrepresent consumer lifestyle choices and buying motivations while oversimplifying the more complex issue of how Americans dispose of, and reduce, their waste.

Bottled water does not compete with tap water, and bottled water companies have no desire to displace strong municipal water systems. Both spring water and purified water categories of bottled water sales have grown rapidly, because consumers value the portability and consistency of fresh taste. Think of all the convenience stores, delis, and gas stations that offer no tap water but have plenty of healthful bottled water.

Most people drink both bottled water and tap water. Far from “competing,” many bottled water companies rely on safe, clean tap water for use in production facilities and as the source water for their purified bottled water.

Consumers need not choose between tap water and bottled water in order to be environmentally responsible. Bottled water packaging is 100% recyclable and among the most highly recycled consumer goods, according to the National Recycling Partnership.

The beverage bottle itself is prime recyclable material when one considers the current value of oil-based plastics as raw materials. Recycled plastic can become new textiles, furniture, or even a new plastic bottle. Plastic water bottles are growing increasingly lighter in weight. Most brands have reduced plastic by at least 40% over the past five years.

Because the FDA classifies it as a food product, bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the FDA and state regulatory agencies. Because the plastic bottle, bottle cap, and label inevitably come from various states, bottled water is subject to the FDA’s interstate jurisdiction, like most other packaged food products. Municipal water is regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state agencies.

Under the Federal Food, Drug, & Cosmetic Act regulations, bottled water must conform to public health standards as strong as EPA rules for tap water. The current system of regulations for the safety and quality of both bottled water and tap water should provide consumers with the confidence to choose either option.

Any suggestion to the contrary is an attempt to create unnecessary paranoia and do a huge disservice to a thirsty public.