



Russian River Watershed Association

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707)833-2553 • www.rrwatershed.org

RRWA August Environmental Column

Take Back the Tap

Bottled Water vs. Tap Water

Pristine natural springs, tropical waterfalls and attractive people are all images we associate with bottled water, thanks to the world of advertising. These images suggest that bottled water is cleaner and healthier than tap water. But is it?

The Scoop

Most consumers don't realize that quality of tap water in the U.S. is actually more comprehensively and more stringently regulated than the quality of bottled water. Additionally, Consumer Reports' research revealed that one-quarter of bottled water sold commercially is *actually tap water* packaged and sold back to us at an astronomically marked up price.

Throughout the nation, there is a growing movement within communities to "Take Back the Tap." This movement urges American consumers to go back to drinking tap water and to ditch the habit of buying expensive bottled water. Why drink expensive bottled water, when your tap water is probably safer, and at least 1,000 times less expensive, ounce for ounce?

Harm to the Environment

While the public's bottled water habit is making water bottling companies rich, this habit is doing something else: It's harming the environment. The Pacific Institute estimates that 60 million plastic water bottles are thrown away *every day* in the United States.

Most of these plastic water bottles are not recycled. They end up in landfills and littered across the nation's landscapes. Like so much of what is thrown onto our sidewalks and into our gutters, plastic bottles end up in our waterways and the ocean. These plastic bottles, whole or broken down into smaller pieces, are then ingested by marine life, killing seals, turtles and other marine mammals.

Oil Guzzlers

Many of us are turning to efficient vehicles and to our own foot-power to get around, leaving oil guzzling cars in our garages. But what about those plastic water bottles we toss after one use? According to Food & Water Watch, bottled water production in the United States used the energy equivalent of 86 million barrels of oil to produce and transport plastic water bottles in 2007—enough to fuel about 1.5 million cars for a year.



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The Solution

So, what should we do? We can Take Back the Tap! Water quality in the Russian River watershed is excellent, and our public water purveyors are proud of their product!

- Purchase a refillable metal water bottle, fill it with tap water and take it with you.
- If you don't like the taste of your tap water, consider the purchase of an inexpensive carbon filter system (such as the pitchers/filter systems available at many stores)
- If you're concerned about there being lead in your tap water, due to the existence of old pipes in your home, get your tap water tested. If there is lead in your tap water, and you can replace the old pipes, do. If you can't, purchase a filtering system for your home specifically for lead removal.
- Finally – turn on the tap, and enjoy!

This article was authored by Cristina Goulart, representing the Town of Windsor for the Russian River Watershed Association. RRWA is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration and watershed enhancement.