



Water & Wastes Digest
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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WATER & WASTES DIGEST is published exclusively for the 90,000+ decision makers in the municipal and industrial water, wastewater and water pollution industries. These individuals actively design, specify, buy, operate and maintain the equipment, chemicals and services used for water treatment. Editorial content in this audited publication highlights new products and literature concerning the supply, collection, treatment and distribution of drinking water; the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and hazardous waste pollution control. Regular Product Emphasis and High-Tech Focus sections feature major equipment and systems. A product directory is included in the annual June *Buyer's Guide*.

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Tapping In

If you live in one of the following cities—Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Diego, Seattle, New York and many more—chances are your local restaurant has served you a drink on a coaster featuring a picture of a tap surrounded by large blue letters spelling out “Tap Water.”

The Tap Water Project, with the help of restaurants around the country, invites customers to donate a minimum of \$1 for the tap water they would normally get for free. The campaign promotes clean and accessible drinking water, available as an everyday privilege to millions, and helps UNICEF provide safe drinking water to children around the world. The project was held during World Water Week, March 16 to 22 and also coincided with the United Nation’s World Water Day, March 22.

I think it is truly amazing how a simple project for a great cause has raised people’s awareness of tap water. Moreover, this project helped place value on a glass of tap water.

Considering that the current average price of tap water is approximately \$1.50 per 1,000 gal—truly a bargain—the Tap Water Project clearly demonstrates that the public is willing to stand behind tap water.

Although people may not really know the true value of water and most are not likely to support a water and sewer rate increase, the good news is that people no longer believe that water from the tap is bad.

After all, it wasn’t that long ago when most news about tap water in the media was mainly focused on health report scares and boil orders. Today, the consumer media has been positive toward tap water; however, it hasn’t been as kind to bottled water.

In 2007 we saw an aggressive attack on the bottled water industry. While these reports haven’t exactly discouraged consumers from drinking bottled water, there has been an increase of media awareness regarding the alleged environmental impact of bottled water. According to a number of media reports, the number of plastic bottles produced by the bottled water industry and subsequently discarded by consumers exacerbate the already existing waste management problem. Some reports have even recommended that consumers avoid bottled water entirely.

Chicago, for example, introduced a bottled water tax that became effective in January 2008. The tax was supposed to raise \$10.5 million, but so far the tax isn’t yielding the amount of money expected; and many speculate that Chicagoans are heading out to the suburbs to buy their bottled water.

While I don’t think tap water’s newfound fame is directly related to the demonizing of bottled water—after all, bottled water is a \$7 billion industry in North America alone—it appears that because of the widely discussed price difference, consumers are ready to tap in.

The question is, will municipalities take advantage of this turn of events and finally rethink the true cost of the services they provide?



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