

Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District

DRINK LOCAL WATER

Fact Sheet



Bottle water companies often make three claims regarding the value of their product versus municipal tap water: **more convenient**, **tastier**, and **purier**. Unfortunately, that is just not the case - municipal tap water tastes great too, and is convenient right at your tap. And tap water has other advantages – it is significantly **cheaper** than bottled water and, meets more stringent public health requirements, and is **environmentally superior** to bottled water.

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There are several urban sources of drinking water for people on the go:

1. Municipal tap water piped directly to residences, businesses, or public facilities.
 - Taking tap water with you is as easy as filling a reusable water bottle.
 - Using an activated carbon filter or simply exposing water left standing in a pitcher to the air will reduce the taste of chlorine.
 - Municipal water is subject to the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Act standards and is inspected by Department of Public Health, water quality testing is an ongoing 24/7 operation, and testing results are reported to every municipal water customer (Gleick 2010).
 - Tap water costs less than a penny a gallon (City of Arcata 2011).
 - Many public water systems generate hydroelectricity and use solar electric systems to off-set their energy needs to pump and purify municipal water, often resulting in little or no carbon footprint in the course of delivering high quality and affordable drinking water. Tap water is not packaged in throw away containers and therefore generates no waste that goes to a landfill or ends up as litter.
 - Lastly, in the case of the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, its Mad River operations which are sustainable and fish friendly, also provide great recreational opportunities on 1,200 acres at Ruth Reservoir, and enhance summer and fall low flows for 75 miles of Mad River, greatly improving aquatic and riparian habitat for many species (HBMWD 2004).

2. Public water hydration stations, these used to be called fountains.
 - Filling water bottles is as convenient as purchasing bottled water at grocery stores.
 - Cell phone apps such as WeTap (<http://wetap.wordpress.com/>) have been developed to allow you to locate the nearest public fountain (Pacific Institute 2011).
 - Water hydration stations use tap water that is run through activated carbon filter to improve taste and reduce chlorine and lead. (Brita 2010)
 - The water source is municipal water which is constantly inspected and monitored and the water quality results publicly disclosed.
 - Public fountains have traditionally been free, and because there is no packaging or transportation required to deliver water, it is very inexpensive and environmentally superior to bottled water.

3. Commercial water purification companies, like H2O To Go, generally set-up their stations in grocery stores to "purify" tap water as it fills a customer's container at a per gallon fee.
 - Filling water bottles is as convenient as purchasing bottled water at grocery stores.
 - Water hydration stations use tap water that is run through activated carbon filter, reverse osmosis filter, activated carbon filter to restore taste, and Ultra Violet light to disinfect the station (H2O To Go 2011).
 - While the water source is municipal water, the treatment in the purification station is not subject to further inspection, monitoring, or public disclosure. Claims of purification cannot be verified by the consuming public.

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- Commercial “purified” water costs more than 40 times as much as tap water (\$0.40 a gallon) but substantially less than bottled water (Per. Observation Arcata 2011)
 - Commercial water purification stations rely on the customer to provide a reusable container, thus avoiding the environmental cost and pollution involved with manufacturing and transporting bottles to the consumer.
4. Commercial bottled water delivery companies who provide water to homes and businesses for a monthly fee.
- Water delivered to a home or business by truck is no more convenient than tap water.
 - The water source for delivered water can be either municipal tap water or spring water. Bottled water is regulated by the US Department of Food and Agriculture not the Environmental Protection Agency or Departments of Public Health. Water quality inspection is not continuous and the inspection results are not disclosed to the public. Spring water claims of superior water quality are seldom substantiated or verified publicly yet they are commonly used to promote their product and to attempt to convince the public that tap water is not safe (Gleick 2010).
 - Commercial “purified” water costs more than 130 times as much as tap water (\$1.30 to \$1.35 a gallon without the monthly dispenser expense) but substantially less than bottled water. (McClellan Mountain Spring Water and Crystal Springs Bottled Water)
5. Commercial wholesale water (beverage) companies sell single-use bottled water to retailers.
- Today bottled water is everywhere that beverages are sold. Consumption of bottled water in the US has increased from 1 gallon per person annually in 1980, to 30 gallons in 2010 (Gleick 2010). In 2010, US consumers paid more than 21 billion dollars for the convenience of bottled water (Gross 2011).
 - As much as 44 percent of bottled water is tap water, the rest claims to be spring water (Gleick 2010).
 - Bottled water is regulated by the US Department of Food and Agriculture not the Environmental Protection Agency or Departments of Public Health. Water quality inspection is not continuous and the inspection results are not disclosed to the public. Bottled water claims of superior water quality are seldom substantiated or verified publicly yet they are commonly used to promote their product and to attempt to convince the public that tap water is not safe.
 - Bottled water is expensive; in 2010 US consumers paid 21 billion for 8.45 billion gallons, averaging \$2.49 per gallon (Gross 2011). In comparison, the annual cost to maintain and operate all of the water systems in the US in 2010 cost 29 billion dollars, less than one cent per gallon (Gross 2011).
 - In 2010, 85 million bottles a day were produced for the bottled water industry. The production and transport of bottled water consumes an average of 43 million gallons of oil a year (Gleick 2010). Countless tons of chemicals and Green House Gases are used and released in the production of single use plastic bottles. Less than 30 percent of the single-use plastic water bottles are recycled, the rest end up in landfills or as litter (Gleick 2010).

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