

Ripple Effect #91

**Tap Water: To Drink or Not to Drink**

It seems that with each year, more and more of us go for a BOTTLE of water when we are thirsty. It must be better for us, we think, safer surely than tap water.

When we look at the facts, however, safety issues blur if not dissolve.

Inspection requirements for public water plants and water supplies are typically stringent. For instance, most city water systems test for coliform bacteria several times a day. Requirement for testing of and at most bottling plants have wider latitude.

City and rural and municipal water systems report on the status of their waters publicly to their citizens. We typically don't find regular reports coming from bottling companies.

So it may not be surprising when the mayor of a large city such as Toronto can declare, as he did recently, that Toronto's water is purer than a major brand of bottled water.

And these facts don't even take into account the costs to society of the bottled water habit.

Bottled water requires significant expenditures of fossil fuel. It takes fossil fuel to produce the plastic bottles. It takes more fuel to ship the bottles. And even more to recover, recycle or dispose of them. One study estimates that the amount of fuel it takes to produce, ship and dispose of one bottle of water would fill a quarter of that bottle with oil.

And the bottles not disposed of properly - which is most of them - cost us precious! One estimate suggests that every ton of plastic used in bottled water, and then disposed of, creates three tons of carbon dioxide. A costly fact for our area of the world, whose climate already balances closely between too much and not enough precipitation.

The most obvious cost of bottled water is the water itself. For it takes two to three times the water to produce that one bottle! Using more water than can be naturally replenished in our ground or surface waters is a cost none of us can bear.

Yes, bottled water may offer convenience. But, if we think of it, what could be more convenient than a pitcher of cold water in the refrigerator (filtered if you like) poured into our favorite glass or mug? And what could welcome guests to our community's events like well-placed, attractive drinking fountains?

Tap water? Definitely to drink. Get in the habit!

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at [www.redriverbasincommission.org](http://www.redriverbasincommission.org).

