

## Go Ahead, Stand Up



This past October marked the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water Act. This legislation certainly changed the landscape for national water quality issues by establishing a basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into U.S. waters and giving the EPA authority to implement pollution control programs. The act also continued requirements to set water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters.

While the quality of U.S. drinking water remains among the best in the world, deteriorating infrastructure and serious droughts have made water treatment and purification more important than ever before.

On Oct. 2, Food & Water Watch released a report demonstrating the challenges states face in maintaining clean water with insufficient government funding, citing the EPA's estimates that the funding gap for total water infrastructure works out to be as much as \$22 billion per year. Overflow from our sewage systems spill 1.28 trillion gal of waste, bacteria and toxic chemicals into our waterways each year, and recent National Research Council investigations found that a substantial proportion of waterborne disease outbreaks, both microbial and chemical, is attributed to problems within the distribution systems.

To combat these problems, the Food & Water Watch is pushing the need for a public trust fund that would utilize money collected and appropriated by the federal government, citing it as the best and most realistic solution to the challenges facing our country's clean water sources. A fund like this would be similar to that of the Highway Trust Fund, which draws money from taxes and motor fuel, sales of trucks and trailers, and the use of heavy vehicles to help pay for maintenance of national roadways.

While this is certainly a viable solution to ensure residents are provided clean drinking water, it seems to me that in a country that remains at war with Iraq and is fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, it may be difficult for our federal government to view water quality as a top spending priority. Even the Highway Trust Fund is deeply lacking in terms of funding, and our roadways continue to crumble.

This is why the water treatment industry is so important. The use of point-of-entry (POE) and point-of-use (POU) devices for water system protection has never been more valuable because these technologies protect our water systems against contamination and diseases such as *Cryptosporidium*, which has been spreading in the Wichita, Kan., area lately. POU/POE technologies such as ultrafiltration and nanofiltration are on the rise and are providing populations with higher quality drinking water.

Severe droughts are ravaging the Southeast—where Georgia is experiencing what may be the worst drought on record—and the southwestern U.S., where water conservation efforts have been a top priority. Bottled water has been as valuable as gold, as officials urge residents to reduce their water use.

While high quality drinking water is vital to life, many in our industry have been under attack by the mainstream media, particularly those in the bottled water market. At the recent International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) Show, I sat in on an intriguing session that addressed the way media outlets have been representing our industry and how you, as water treatment professionals, should respond.

Several media outlets have been creating a tap versus bottle war, which is incorrect. The problem is that many mainstream media journalists are unaware of business trade associations, such as the Water Quality Association or IBWA, which provide the facts. With that being said, it is up to the industry to make itself heard. Be aware of critics and know the facts. Do not be pushed into choosing a side when there really are no sides to choose.

Water purification and treatment ensures residents are getting the safest water possible to live a healthy life. Stand up for yourself and the industry—as a water treatment professional, you should be receiving praise for the work you do, not being attacked.

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### coming up next month

The December Reference Guide issue of *Water Quality Products* will feature a state of the industry report as well as various articles on all sectors of the water treatment industry. Features will include application stories, regulatory and technical updates, a special business section, as well as 2007 top reader-choice products and 2008 product preview.

Be sure to visit our website for daily industry news updates at [www.wqpmag.com](http://www.wqpmag.com).

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