



Tom Lauria

# The Truth About Bottled Water

For more than 50 years, the International Bottled Water Assn. (IBWA) has assisted and regulated bottled water production in the U.S. *Water Quality Products* Associate Editor Leslie Streicher recently talked to IBWA Vice President of Communications Tom Lauria about the benefits, myths and environmental impact of bottled water.

## Leslie Streicher: How is bottled water regulated?

**Tom Lauria:** Bottled water products are produced in single-serve PET plastic bottles, 3- or 5-gal home and office deliver jugs, as well as glass bottles and aluminum cans. All are federally regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are subject to rigid federal standards.

Types of water contained in bottled products include spring water, artesian water, distilled water and purified municipal tap water. Bottled water labeling must accurately indicate what type of water it contains.

Bottled water must comply with the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, while the FDA's bottled water regulations must follow U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tap water standards.

All forms of bottled water contain either purified tap water or natural water from deep, protected underground aquifers. Bottled water can often contain minerals from either the source or added during the purification process.

## Streicher: What are some common myths about bottled water?

**Lauria:** For too long, critics pretended that we just fill the bottles out back with a garden hose. Bottled water is a safe, healthy consumer product. At a July 8, 2009, hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, an FDA official testified that no major illness or safety concerns have been associated with bottled water in the past decade.

Also, EPA scientists and researchers have estimated that tap water consumption is the cause of more than 16 million cases of acute gastrointestinal illness in this country every year.

## Streicher: Why is bottled water an important product?

**Lauria:** During disasters—hurricanes, floods, wildfires or just a water-main break—bottled water is a lifesaver. But even at home, many of us lead busy lives and rely on the convenience of bottled water. We reach for it instead of other packaged beverages that may contain caffeine, colorings, sugar or artificial sweeteners we may want to avoid.

Some tap water systems can have unpleasant odors, taste and color. For many consumers, drinking bottled water is safe, easy and inexpensive when purchased in bulk.

## Streicher: What is IBWA doing to advocate sustainable bottled water production?

**Lauria:** Over the past eight years, the gram weight of the 16.9-oz, single-serve PET bottled water container has dropped by 32.6%. In 2000, the average PET bottled water container weighed 18.9 grams. By 2008, the average amount of PET resin in each bottle had declined to 12.7 grams. More than 1.3 billion grams of PET resin have been saved today by the bottled water industry through container "light-weighting."

IBWA is also very active in promoting recycling. Humans need sufficient daily hydration and bottled water delivers it pleasantly, safely, easily and conveniently.

## Streicher: How does bottled water production affect groundwater?

**Lauria:** The bottled water industry uses minimal amounts of groundwater to produce an important consumer product—and does so with great efficiency. According to a 2005 study by the Drinking Water Research Foundation, annual

bottled water production accounts for less than 0.02% of the total groundwater withdrawn in the U.S. each year.

Additionally, 87% of the water withdrawn by bottled water companies was actually bottled for human consumption. Because a long-term sustainable supply of high-quality water is the foundation of bottled water companies, IBWA member bottlers recognize the critical importance of environmental conservation and stewardship of all water resources.

Bottled water companies perform hydrogeological assessments, monitor [water] quality and quantity at source wells, purchase surrounding land for protection and recharge of their source, and participate in local and regional water stewardship partnerships on aquifer protection.

Groundwater is a renewable natural resource that is replenished through the hydrologic cycle. The duration of the replenishment cycle is influenced by weather patterns, recharge areas and characteristics, geologic settings and other site-specific factors. When developing and using water resources, it is essential to balanced the replenishment cycle with regional demands.

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## WQA Executive Director to Retire



Water Quality Assn. Executive Director Peter Censky announced that he is retiring next year. The retirement will likely take place in the first months of 2012, when the transition to a new executive director is made. Censky was hired to run the association in 1987.

## Aquatech Amsterdam Set for Nov. 1 to 4

Water professionals from all over the world are preparing to gather for Aquatech Amsterdam 2011, a trade exhibition for the global water industry. The event takes place Nov. 1 to 4 in the Netherlands and features a myriad of presentations, workshops, and networking and entertainment opportunities for attendees.

Attendees can look forward to technology presentations featuring solutions from more than 40 countries.

## Nika Water Participates in Kenya Well Drilling Project



Nika Water, a water bottle company that donates 100% of its profits to actions that alleviate global poverty, spent two weeks in Pimbiniet, Kenya, this summer to build a school library for the impoverished village. Along with Free the Children, a non-governmental organization focused on poverty alleviation, the Nika team, volunteers and villagers celebrated the official start of drilling for a deep-water well that will provide clean water for the entire village.

## Dow Chemical Plans Manufacturing Facility in Saudi Arabia



The Dow Chemical Co. announced plans to invest in a best-in-class manufacturing facility for Dow FILMTEC reverse osmosis elements in Saudi Arabia. The new facility will supply water desalination and water reuse technologies for potable, non-potable and industrial applications, serving the Middle East, North Africa and emerging markets worldwide.

## Networking News

Watts Water Technologies Inc. appointed Elie Melham as president of its Asia sector.

Doug White joined the Culligan Dealers Assn. of North America as director of member services.

NSF Intl. promoted Tom Bruursema to general manager of NSF sustainability.

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