



Dr. Peter H. Gleick

Tapping In

As the commercial bottled water industry continues to gain momentum, public drinking fountains are disappearing. *Water Quality Products* Assistant Editor Amy McIntosh spoke with Dr. Peter H. Gleick, cofounder and president of the Pacific Institute, to find out how the institute hopes to encourage users to document and utilize existing public water fountains using the WeTap mobile app.

Amy McIntosh: How does the WeTap app work?

Dr. Peter H. Gleick: Very simply, the application (available now for Android, and at www.wetap.org) permits the user to do two things: find the nearest drinking water fountain on a map, and add new fountains to the open global database of drinking water fountains, with information about where it is; whether it works; and if it is clean, chilled, accessible and more. A photo can also be uploaded.

McIntosh: What is the ultimate goal of the app?

Gleick: The objective of the app—and the project as a whole—is to improve and promote access to public drinking water fountains as an alternative to bottled water. One reason people have turned to bottled water is the disappearance of working water fountains, or the difficulty of finding one when we want to. The app is designed to help address these problems.

McIntosh: What are the plans for the future of the app?

Gleick: We have several major objectives in the future: to develop an iPhone version (at present, it is only available on Android platforms); to expand public awareness of the app so water fountains can be comprehensively mapped everywhere; and to expand support for new water fountains and the better maintenance of existing ones.

McIntosh: Why are public drinking fountains important for a community?

Gleick: In ancient times, no city of Greece or Rome was considered civilized if it did not have public drinking fountains with safe, accessible water. Such fountains are considered a symbol of the commitment of a community to meet local needs for basic services such as safe water.

McIntosh: What types of public places benefit the most from drinking fountains?

Gleick: We believe that any public space where large numbers of people are present should have clean, accessible water fountains, especially

schools, sports arenas, parks, shopping malls and arts centers.

McIntosh: How does the quality of bottled water compare to the quality of water from a drinking fountain?

Gleick: Tap water in the U.S. is mostly superb, and as I note in my book *Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water*, it is often better regulated and monitored than bottled water. Water fountains should be regularly maintained and clean, like any public service, but the public should have no fear about the quality of water from water fountains.

McIntosh: What arguments can be made to persuade the public to choose a drinking fountain over purchasing a bottle of water?

Gleick: There are many arguments to be made, including economic and environmental ones. There are serious environmental problems associated with our production and use of bottled water, including the massive energy requirements to make plastic bottles, fill them and move them to stores, and the terrible waste disposal problems that result from throwing them away instead of recycling them.

In addition to this, bottled water is expensive—more than 2,000 times more expensive than tap water. Consumers should be aware of these environmental and economic costs when they choose, and they should have the option of knowing that there are safe and clean drinking water fountains nearby—and that WeTap can help find them. *wqp*

Dr. Peter H. Gleick is co-founder and president of the Pacific Institute. Gleick can be reached at pgleick@pacinst.org or 510.251.1600.

Amy McIntosh is assistant editor for *Water Quality Products*. McIntosh can be reached at amcintosh@sgcmail.com or 847.954.7966.

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EPA Updates Drinking Water Rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has updated the rule for pathogens in drinking water, including setting a limit for *E. coli* to better protect public health. Under the Revised Total Coliform Rule, public drinking water systems are required to notify the public if a test exceeds the maximum contaminant level for *E. coli*. Other updates require systems with histories of non-compliance to increase monitoring and provide small systems with incentives to meet guidelines.

Summit on the Summit Raises Awareness of Clean Water Crisis

Summit on the Summit, a cross-platform global initiative, kicked off its expedition to Mt. Kilimanjaro in January.



Founded by Grammy-nominated musician Kenna, the grueling seven-day, 50-mile climb up Kilimanjaro was designed to draw attention to the impact of waterborne diseases, educate the public about the solutions and resources available and generate a call to action to help eradicate the problem.

Update on 'Fracking' Study Released

The U.S. EPA provided an update on its national study to better understand potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources. The update outlines work currently underway, including the status of research projects that will inform the final study. Results of the study, which Congress requested EPA to complete, are expected to be released in a draft for public and peer review in 2014.

Database Tracks Aquatic-Related Incidents Worldwide

The National Swimming Pool Foundation developed the Worldwide Aquatic News Incident Database, which tracks global aquatic incidents that occur in, or are related to, swimming pools and hot tubs. These



events may result in injury, illness and death. It also tracks aquatic-related lawsuits and pool closures. The foundation provides access to the database for educational purposes at no charge.

IBWA Video Shows Impact of Bottled Water Ban

The International Bottled Water Assn.'s (IBWA) consumer website released a video showing how bottled water bans are having an unintended effect by shifting consumption to less healthy drinks packaged in the same material as bottled water. According to IBWA, early indications of restricted consumer access to bottled water show that these efforts are causing people to drink other packaged drinks, not necessarily turning to the tap. *wqp*

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