

Story: Is our obsession with bottled water hurting the planet?

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Link: <http://www.reviewjournal.com/life/home-and-garden/our-obsession-bottled-water-hurting-the-planet>

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I represent the bottled water industry and wanted to touch on a few important points raised in this article. While I agree with you that drinking water is a simple and smart choice that helps people live a healthier lifestyle – whether it's from the tap, a filter, or bottled – I also need to correct several false and misleading claims you make regarding bottled water.

Even with continuing growth and increased consumption, bottled water still has the smallest water and energy use footprint of any packaged beverage. On average, only 1.32 liters of water (including the liter of water consumed) are used to produce one liter of finished bottled water. Your article falsely implies that bottled water contributes to drought. Nothing could be farther from the truth. When it comes to overall water use, the entire bottled water industry uses only 0.01% of all water used in the U.S. on an annual basis.

Bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). By federal law, FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water are as stringent as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for tap water. And, in some very important cases such as lead, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent. See: <http://bit.ly/1Kgpcfx>

You also make another patently false claim regarding inter-state regulation of bottled water. FDA jurisdiction over bottled water products (and any other product regulated by FDA) extends not only to those products that move in interstate commerce but also to those products sold within a single state that are enclosed in packaging materials that have moved in interstate commerce (plastic, ink, labels, etc.). Known as the component theory of FDA jurisdiction, courts have long held that if any component of a food product moves in interstate commerce, FDA has jurisdiction over the finished product, regardless of whether the finished product itself moves in interstate commerce. Moreover, Congress has enacted a law that expressly presumes that all food and beverage products are sold in interstate commerce. (21 U.S.C. § 379 (a))

Bottled water competes with other packaged beverages, not tap water. In fact, 73% of the growth in bottled water sales from 1998 to 2011 was from people switching from sugary drinks. Most people who drink bottled water also drink tap water. That said, when it comes to advertising, the amount spent for bottled water is a tiny fraction of what's spent on soda and beer. The demand for bottled water is consumer driven.

At 37%, the recycling rate for single-serve PET plastic bottled water containers has more than doubled in the past 10 years, and PET plastic bottled water bottles are the most frequently recycled PET beverage container in curbside recycling programs. PET plastic bottled water containers, measured in tons of landfill space, make up just 3.3% of all beverage containers that end up in landfills. Waste percentage

numbers are much higher for the glass (66.75), aluminum (7.9%), and plastic soda bottles (13.3%) that end up in landfills.

And, PET plastic is the most recycled and recyclable plastic on the market. Contrary to your “downcycled” claim, recycled PET plastic (rPET) can be reused indefinitely and rPET products are in extremely high demand. Many bottled water companies already use 50% and in some case 100% rPET for their bottled water containers.

Purified bottled water, typically sourced from municipal water systems, is not just tap water in a bottle. Once this water enters the bottled water plant, several processes are employed to ensure that it meets the FDA’s purified water standard. The finished water product is then sealed in a bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer.

Lastly, the bottled water industry supports a strong public water system, which is important for providing citizens with clean and safe drinking water. In fact, many bottled water companies use public water sources for their purified bottled water products. Also, the existence of a bottled water industry in the United States has no impact on other countries’ water systems or the accessibility of water in other parts of the world.

In the end, drinking water is the smart, healthy option and bottled water is the best packaged beverage choice.