



1700 Diagonal Road, Suite 650  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
T: 703-647-4609  
[chogan@bottledwater.org](mailto:chogan@bottledwater.org)  
[www.bottledwater.org](http://www.bottledwater.org)

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**Billie Kanfer** [bkanfer@skidmore.edu](mailto:bkanfer@skidmore.edu)

**Jacob Reiskin** [jreiskin@skidmore.edu](mailto:jreiskin@skidmore.edu)

Editors  
The Skidmore News  
[www.skidmorenews.com](http://www.skidmorenews.com)

Dear Mr. Kanfer and Mr. Reiskin,

I am writing in response to Wilber Chan and Greg Harris's December 3, 2015 Op-Ed titled: [\*Tapping into Sustainability, Eliminating Bottled Water\*](#). In the interest of opinion balance, I am offering an alternative view, which I do sincerely request you consider publishing in *The Skidmore News*.

**Bottled water is not the environmental villain your publication suggests**

Bottled water is the smart choice for healthy hydration. For those who want to eliminate or moderate calories, sugar, caffeine, artificial flavors or colors, and other ingredients from their diet, choosing bottled water is the right move. In fact, since 1998, approximately 73 percent of the growth in bottled water consumption has come from people switching from carbonated soft drinks, juices, and milk.

In fact, new research published in the American Journal of Public Health has found that when bottled water is not available, people choose other packaged drinks, ones that are less healthy and packaged in much thicker plastic containers, not necessarily tap water. "[The Unintended Consequences of Changes in Beverage Options and the Removal of Bottled Water on a University Campus](#)," by University of Vermont professor of nutrition Rachel K. Johnson, PhD, MPH, and her co-author, found UVM's decision to remove bottled water drove students, faculty, staff and visitors to purchase more unhealthy sugary drinks (by 33 percent). At the same time, the number of plastic beverage containers on campus actually increased (by 6 percent) and thus entering the waste stream. This happened even though the university provided free reusable water bottles at campus events, retrofitted 68 water fountains to allow for the refilling of reusable water bottles and conducted an educational campaign to inform students about the effort.

People need to drink more water. The consumption of water, whether from the bottle or the tap, is a good thing and any actions that discourage people from drinking bottled water are not in the public interest. Banning or restricting access to bottled water directly impacts the right of people to choose the healthiest beverage on the shelf. And for many, bottled water is a critical

alternative to other packaged beverages, which are often less healthy. Bottled water must therefore be available wherever packaged beverages are sold.

Bottled water is also the best hydration source when either tap water or consumer health is compromised. The bottled water industry supports a strong public water system. However, the water from public water systems is often compromised after emergency situations or natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, tornados, fires, or boil alerts). During these times, bottled water is a necessary and reliable option to deliver clean, safe drinking water. Certain consumers may also require reliable access to bottled water due to medical issues, such as compromised immune systems, allergies, cancer, or other significant health conditions. In fact, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals with compromised immune systems drink bottled water

Bottled water's environmental footprint is the lowest of all packaged beverages. And we now know that banning or restricting access to bottled water will just shift consumption to other beverage products whose containers are made of the same material as bottled water – except carbonated soft drinks use much more plastic (23.9 grams per container vs. 9.25 grams) due to the strength requirements caused by carbonation. Restricting or banning bottled water will therefore increase the amount of plastic bottles in the waste stream.

It's also worth noting that if you compare bottled water to other packaged beverages, you see that bottled water containers make up only 3.3 percent of all drink packaging that ends up in landfills. (See attached drink packaging infographic).

All bottled water containers are 100 percent recyclable, and PET plastic bottled water containers are the single most recycled item in nationwide curbside collection programs. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), plastic bottles make up less than one-third of one percent of the U.S. waste stream. At 37 percent, the recycling rate for single-serve PET plastic bottled water containers more than doubled between 2003 and 2013. And, while the bottled water industry supports strong community recycling initiatives, a continued focus on increased recycling rates of all consumer packaging is critical.

Bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a packaged food product and it provides a consistently safe and reliable source of drinking water. By federal law, the FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water must be at least as stringent as the EPA regulations that govern tap water. In some cases, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent.

Bottled water is a packaged food product and as such competes with other packaged drinks, not tap water. Most people who drink bottled water also drink tap water. The industry promotes drinking water for both sources – bottled water and the tap. So, no, we are not at all worried about quality tap water competing with our products.

About 70 percent of what people consume these days comes in some sort of packaging. PET plastic used to make bottled water containers is the most lightweight and recycled packaging of all beverages. Bottled water also uses the lowest energy and water in production, and it is the healthiest beverage on the shelf.

As Americans are making great efforts to choose healthier foods and beverages, it is not in the best interest of your readers to discourage consumption of this safe, healthy, and water-efficient product.

You can learn more about bottled water by visiting [www.bottledwater.org](http://www.bottledwater.org).

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Please feel free to contact me should you require any clarification.

Sincerely,

Chris Hogan  
Vice President of Communications  
International Bottled Water Association  
703-647-4609  
[chogan@bottledwater.org](mailto:chogan@bottledwater.org)