

Bottled Water Policy

Policy No: 21-02

Policy Title: Bottled Water

Policy Statement: Freshwater Conservation Canada does not support the commodification of water (extraction, bottling and sale of water for the sole purpose of profit).

Principles Applied:

- Water is essential for all life and should be viewed as a human right.
- Natural systems evolve to exploit the range of available water within a region and as such the concept of excess water can be considered spurious.
- Extraction of water from streams or aquifers can alter the movement, volume, timing and quality of water available to the environment. Any extractions must demonstrate no net harm to natural systems.
- The extraction, bottling, and distribution of commercial water can create significant secondary problems such as plastic waste, potential contamination of aquifers and impacts on water distribution to natural systems.

Policy Rationale and Considerations:

Although the bottling and sale of water for commercial purposes does satisfy a demand for a readily available and easily transportable source of water, the wholesale development of an industry to extract a public resource and sell it for profit has created multiple social and ecological problems including: removal of water from shared sources with public supply; lack of trust in the public supply; impact of location of extraction on natural environments (e.g. reduction in baseflow in streams and wetlands); and creation of significant waste of discarded plastic bottles and subsequent production of contaminants such as microplastics. From an ecological perspective, the wholesale exploitation of public water resources can have dire impacts on natural systems and their sustainability, especially if located in sensitive ecological areas and extracting from sensitive aquifers. Where commercial bottled water extraction currently exists, an examination of the true value of the

extracted resource is necessary to ensure proper compensation to the Canadian public and to ensure sustainability holds priority over corporate profitability.

Objectives of Policy Statement:

Freshwater Conservation Canada wishes to improve the public's understanding of the value of their water resources, the importance of public sources of safe water, the potential impacts of commercial bottled water extraction from shallow aquifers and the impacts of extraction on natural features. We also wish to ensure that governments carefully review development of commercial water taking in relationship to the sustainability of local watersheds and water resources, the protection of public water supply, and the impacts of more waste from commercial bottled water and its packaging.

Implications to Organization:

The review of proposed commercial bottled water taking locations can be very time consuming for staff and requires the expertise of hydrogeologists and government policy. Freshwater Conservation Canada must determine the best ways to share information on our concerns for expanding commercial bottled water taking and its implications to natural systems.

Delivery:

Freshwater Conservation Canada promotes bottled water free work areas in the field and in the office. Freshwater Conservation Canada will urge governments to scrutinize the development of new commercial bottled water taking and urge for the reduced use of bottled water by the general public. Freshwater Conservation Canada will also urge governments, where facilities do exist or are approved, to ensure a fee, based on process and administrative costs in addition to the true value of the resource itself is reflected in the royalties. Freshwater Conservation Canada should promote the development of educational materials on water safety, the importance of natural systems and the relative safety of public water supply.

Effective Date: February 25, 2021

Last Board Approval Date: February 25, 2021