

**Presentation to the  
Democratic Central Committee of Shasta County  
June 17, 2019  
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We Advocate Thorough Environmental Review**

**I. SGMA in our area**

I want to start by commenting on the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and its relevance or lack thereof to the CGWC situation.

Siskiyou County has 4 medium priority basins, as defined by a document called Bulletin 118, that must meet SGMA requirements by 2022. They are the Shasta, Scott and Butte Valleys and the Tulelake area. The County Flood Control and Water Conservation District is the oversight body for these basins and plans are being developed. The problem for us is that volcanic aquifers are NOT listed in Bulletin 118, so SGMA is irrelevant for our area. One of our board members participates in an NGO Groundwater Collaborative and the Sierra Water Working Group that have been working with the Department of Water Resources to get volcanic aquifers covered in Bulletin 118 so SGMA would apply to these important watershed areas. Well, it is not going to happen with DWR. Alas, it looks like it will take an act of the state legislature to make that happen. Remember, the State legislature is controlled by the democrats--please do all you can to make the legislature include volcanic aquifers under SGMA. Meanwhile, the word is out--- our area has become a target for companies seeking to exploit groundwater extraction that is completely unregulated at this point.

**II. Issues in Weed, McCloud, --surface waters under attack.**

In contrast with groundwater, surface waters have been highly regulated in this state since the early 1900s. However, that does not mean that surface waters allocated for public use are invulnerable. Here are two examples:

**A. McCloud:** About 10 years ago, in the Community of McCloud on the south side of Mount Shasta, Nestle tried to set up a huge water bottling operation that was successfully opposed by the Community. Now a different group of investors is trying to set up a large water bottling operation: they would purchase 200 gallons per minute of water from the McCloud Service District which owns the rights to water from several springs on the south side of Mt Shasta. They will build a 100,000 square foot facility and bottle water in single-use plastic bottles, and to ensure they capture revenue from every single drop of that 200 gallons per minute, they will transport bulk water to other bottling locations. Many community members see this as an attack on water as a public resource. Of course, there are also issues of heavy truck traffic, air and water pollution, violation of Indigenous Peoples rights, etc. McCloud community members are opposing this effort, and W.A.T.E.R. is participating in the struggle to protect that water resource, including participating in the CEQA process. Of utmost concern is that this group

of developers, who pitch the project as a small "startup boutique water bottling operation" will likely set up this plant only to sell it to a major multinational bottler like Nestle or Crystal Geysers.

**B. Weed:** The City of Weed started as a company town owned by a lumber mill, first owned by Abner Weed, then Long Bell Lumber Company, then International Paper, then starting in 1983 by Roseburg Forest Products. In 1932, the court decreed water from a spring called Beaugan Springs to the Long Bell Lumber company for domestic and municipal use in the town of Weed and for industrial uses at the lumber mill. Fast forward through the past almost 90 years, the lumber mill has changed ownership a few times, the City has incorporated as an entity separate from the lumber mill, and even the agency that oversees water rights issues in our area has changed.

Now Roseburg Forest Products, the current mill owner and operator, is claiming they own the water rights to the City's share of Beaugan Springs water. Roseburg is trying to force the City off of its most important source of municipal and domestic drinking water so that they, Roseburg, can sell it to the international water bottling industry (CGR in Weed). We believe Roseburg is violating the citizens' human rights that are codified in the state constitution and state health and water codes. RFP has sought to do this by misconstruing a lack of clarity in the legal documentation of the transfer of water rights to the City of Weed by the previous mill owners and through applying its disproportionate financial and legal resources against our vulnerable and economically disadvantaged community.

RFP has also sued a citizen's group, Water for Citizens of Weed, CA (WCWC) who objected to the company's actions by requesting that the area's Water District investigate the situation. This legal action has been declared a "SLAPP" suit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) by a Siskiyou County Superior court judge. The judge ruled that we were simply exercising our first amendment rights of free speech and to petition our government for redress of grievances. However, RFP has appealed and is thus continuing its (still unsuccessful) attempt to stifle the voice of concerned community members who are simply trying to maintain access to their historic water supply.

The City of Weed and RFP are in court over ownership of the water, and although there is some lack of clarity in the record of ownership, there is also evidence that the water right was transferred to the City in 1982. In spite of the City's strong case for ownership, we fear the financial onus of defending the City's claim to the water has become an unsustainable burden for the City and we suspect that RFP is attempting to use its substantial financial and legal resources to force the financially strapped City into paying for water for which they already have the rights. We see this is an abuse of the legal system, just as the SLAPP suit has been. Unfortunately, this seems to be a commonly used bullying tactic by large corporations looking to take advantage of disadvantaged communities.

**III. Global impacts of beverage bottling industry:** There are multiple global environmental impacts of the beverage bottling industry including privatization of a public resource, water and air pollution, excessive energy consumption, green house gas emissions, and plastic pollution. I want to focus on the last of these since plastic pollution has been much in the news lately.

Plastic pollution is a huge problem worldwide and beverage bottling industries are significant contributors to the problem because they bottle most of their products in single use plastic bottles. You have probably seen or heard about the floating islands of plastic waste in the oceans and seen photos of aquatic wildlife that has been poisoned by plastic waste. You have probably heard about studies that show microplastics are in the human food chain, including in humans, and the endocrine-disrupting chemical they can carry. You have probably heard that it may take a millennium or more for plastics to degrade. You may recycle your single use plastic bottles, but the reality is that most people don't. It is estimated that only about 10 percent of recyclable plastic is recycled worldwide. So what is in the news lately.

The plastic recycling that has been occurring was mostly done in China (note transportation impacts of that). However, as of Jan 1 2018, China is no longer taking recyclable plastics. This has resulted in a huge back log of plastics in recycle centers as people look for and hope for some alternative route for recycling. In some cases, the plastic waste has been shipped to unlicensed recyclers in other countries that do not have the capacity to recycle--so it ends up in their landfills. Malaysia is one such country, and their government recently announced it will start sending those waste-filled ships back to the countries of origin.

Perhaps most striking is a recent amendment to the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention is an international treaty that controls transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. Just last month a gathering of participating countries voted to add plastic waste to the list of hazardous wastes it regulates. This puts regulations and transparency on how plastic waste can be transported across international boundaries in a legally-binding way. (The US, one of the world's largest producers of plastics, is not a signer to this treaty).

Several countries have now made commitments to eliminate single use plastics, e.g., UK, EU, Canada.

In contrast, last year Crystal Geysers Water Company moved from bottling their Tejava Tea in 1 liter glass bottles to single use, single serving size plastic bottles. What was their explanation for doing so: it is for the "convenience of their customers". Of course we know it is for the benefit of their bottom line. It is imperative that we as consumers show Crystal Geysers and similar corporations that convenience is not our highest priority.

There is a big international push now to eliminate single use plastics of all kinds. I encourage you all to do so. There is a web site called [plasticfreejuly.org](http://plasticfreejuly.org). I encourage you to go there for suggestions on how you can eliminate single use plastics in your life, including single use beverage bottles. I also encourage you to support legislation that bans single use plastics.