



1700 Diagonal Road, Suite 650
Alexandria, VA 22314
T: 703-647-4609
jculora@bottledwater.org
www.bottledwater.org

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Matt Simon

Newsy – Executive Producer
Matt.simon@scripps.com

Eric Ludgood

Newsy – Head of News
Eric.ludgood@scripps.com

Zach Toombs

Newsy – Executive Producer and Deputy Director for Programs
Zach.Toombs@scripps.com

Angela M Hill

Newsy – National Investigative Producer
angela.hill@scripps.com

CC:

Christian Bryant

Newsy – Host, In The Loop
Christian.bryant@scripps.com

David Hudson

E.W. Scripps Company
David.hudson@scripps.com

Dear Producers and Editors:

I am writing regarding your Newsy segment, "Is bottled water really that much better than tap water?" which was released on April 5, 2022. This "In the Loop" episode is clearly biased against bottled water and contains many false and misleading statements. The story is based solely on input from several well-known critics of bottled water and does not include any comments from bottled water companies or industry representatives. As a result, Newsy is not providing coverage that is "accurate, complete and fairly presented," as promised in your journalism ethics guidelines. In fact, you are grossly misleading viewers about the bottled water industry.

The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) requests that Newsy either remove or update its story to include the facts about bottled water so that your viewers receive balanced coverage on this matter.

Here are the facts:

- Bottled water does not compete with tap water. Bottled water competes with other, often less-healthy, packaged drinks (e.g., carbonated soft drinks and other sugary beverages). Results from IBWA's Harris Poll show that most bottled water drinkers (71%) drink both tap and bottled water. That same poll shows people are consuming bottled water when they are out and about *instead of* choosing less healthy calorie-laden beverages.

Those results indicate that most bottled water drinkers are “water” drinkers in general, preferring to consume a calorie- and additive-free beverage *instead of* other packaged drinks, especially when away from home.

Sales data support the statement that consumers prefer to drink bottled water, as soda and juice sales have declined during the past decade while bottled water sales have increased. In fact, since 2010, approximately 44 percent of the growth in bottled water consumption in the United States has come from people switching from carbonated soft drinks and juices to bottled water, according to Beverage Marketing Corporation sales data. See: https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2020BWstats_BMC_pub2021BWR.pdf

- Bottled water, as a packaged food product, is strictly and comprehensively regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Federal law requires that FDA bottled water regulations be as protective of the public health as standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for tap water. In fact, in some cases, such as lead, the FDA bottled water regulations are more stringent than the EPA tap water standards. In addition, on a gallon-for-gallon basis, bottled water is required by law to be tested for safety at least 30 times more often than tap water.
- PET plastic bottled water containers have the lowest environmental impact compared to all other drink packaging types, according to a report by Trayak prepared for IBWA. The report measured several variables to determine the overall impact of specific packaging types, including PET water bottles, PET soda bottles, glass bottles, aluminum cans, and beverage cartons. The variables measured include fossil fuel use, human impact, water use, mineral resource use, greenhouse gas emissions, and freshwater ecotoxicity and eutrophication. The assessment shows that PET water bottles have a lower environmental impact than the other containers across each of the considered indicators. Much of this benefit is derived from the low material usage compared to the other container types, with the average PET water bottle considered using less than half of the material weight of the other container types. Lower material usage means less impact from material extraction, manufacturing, and ultimately results in less material entering landfills or needing to be recycled. See: https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/IBWA-SalesBanInfographic_IG_no5_drink-packaging.png

- Bottled water also has the lowest water- and energy-use ratios of all packaged beverages. On average, it takes only 1.39 liters of water to produce 1 liter of finished bottled water (including the 1 liter of water consumed), which is the lowest water-use ratio of any packaged beverage product. And on average, only 0.21 mega joules of energy are used to produce 1 liter of bottle of water.
- Most bottled water is produced and consumed locally or at most, regionally. Beverage Marketing Corporation, a source you also referenced in your story, notes that in 2020, imported water represented only 1.9 percent of the bottled water market in the United States. See https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2020BWstats_BMC_pub2021BWR.pdf.
- It is important to note that FDA defines bottled water produced using a municipal source as “purified bottled water” and is not “just tap water in a bottle.” Once the municipal source water enters the bottled water plant, several processes are employed to ensure that it meets the purified or sterile standard of the U.S. Pharmacopeia 23rd Revision. Those treatments can include reverse osmosis, distillation, or de-ionization. The finished water product is then placed in a bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer. To learn more about this process, review this chart: <https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Flowchart-Final-scaled.jpg>.
- Consumers who choose bottled water over other packaged beverages are actually making a beneficial impact on the environment. Because, in addition to being the healthiest packaged beverage product and the smallest environmental footprint of all packaged drinks, bottled water containers also use significantly less plastic than other drinks. Products such as carbonated soft drinks, juices, and other sugary beverages require far more plastic packaging due to carbonation and manufacturing processes (using at least 142 percent more plastic) and have a greater environmental impact than bottled water. See here: https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Environmental_Impact_of_Drink_Packaging_2021_800.jpg

Drinking zero-calorie beverages, such as water, instead of sugary drinks is regularly cited as a key component of a more healthful lifestyle. Promoting greater consumption of water from all sources—tap, bottled, or filtered—can only benefit those efforts. One of the simplest changes a person can make is to switch to drinking water instead of other beverages that are heavy with sugar and calories. Bottled water is a smart decision and a healthy choice when it comes to beverage options.

Nine out of 10 Americans (91 percent) expect bottled water to be available wherever other drinks are sold, according to a survey conducted on behalf of IBWA by The Harris Poll. The current healthy consumption shift from sugary drinks to bottled water could also work in reverse. If bottled water is not available, 74 percent of people say that they will turn to other packaged drinks, not tap water, The Harris Poll found (<https://bottledwater.org/nr/consumers-want-bottled-water-to-be-available-wherever-drinks-are-sold-and-if-its-not-most-will-choose-another-packaged-beverage-that-uses->

[much-more-plastic/](#)). Ultimately, that would contribute to a less healthy population and more plastic waste going into the landfills.

Bottled water is America's favorite drink for a reason: it is a safe, convenient, great tasting alternative to other less healthy packaged drinks. Research shows that attempts to deter people from enjoying bottled water will lead them to consume less healthy beverages that contain unwanted sugar, caffeine, or other additives. And the packaging used for those other drinks has a greater impact on the environment. With the high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease in the United States, discouraging people from choosing the healthiest drink option is not in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Jill Culora
Vice President of Communications
International Bottled Water Association