

Great Lakes, Great Michigan



The facts on water diversions and bottled water

We need protections against diversions – whether via pipeline, tanker, or in bottles

Michigan citizens overwhelmingly agree that we should not export Great Lakes water (77% in a recent poll). However, the one law that prevents exports of Great Lakes water, the Water Resources Development Act (or WRDA), is being challenged in court by Nestle, the Swiss multinational corporation that currently has two water bottling facilities in Michigan and has plans for more. If that law is struck down, there will be nothing preventing large scale exports of water from the Great Lakes.

A billion gallons of water exported out of the Great Lakes basin each year in a pipe would have serious impacts on our water resources, and a billion gallons of water exported each year in bottles would have the same serious impacts on our waters. Without stronger laws, our waters are vulnerable to such large exports, and it makes no difference whether the water is exported in bottles or in other forms of transport.



Demand for bottled water is rapidly increasing

There really is no ceiling to the demand for bottled water, especially as access to clean, fresh water declines around the world.

Worldwide consumption of bottled water has more than doubled in the past decade, and is increasing at a rate of over 9% every year. In 2004, more than 6.8 billion gallons of bottled water were consumed in the U.S., and 40.8 billion gallons were consumed worldwide.¹ At this rate, it is not difficult to imagine a proposal to bottle and export at least a billion gallons per year from the Great Lakes basin to other parts of the U.S. or around the world. Without new state laws that protect against diversions of Great Lakes water, *including exports in bottles*, there would be nothing to prevent large exports like this.



¹ Beverage Marketing Corporation. Available at www.bottledwater.org.

Bottled water is not the same as other products

In their efforts to open up Great Lakes water for export, companies such as Nestlé argue that bottled water is the same as other products containing water.

The truth is that bottled water is not the same as other products, and Michigan citizens know the difference. To be clear:

1. There is absolutely no effort to prevent the export of Michigan produce and goods. We want to prevent exports of Michigan's water, however transported, in order to ***keep our water at work for Michigan***—in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and to support and maintain healthy natural resources.
2. There is no risk of billions of gallons of water being exported from the Great Lakes basin in cherries each year, but that risk exists with bottled water. There is a limited market for products, but not for water.

Privatization threatens the public's control of lakes, streams and other waters

Bottled water companies would like water to be treated like any other commodity, as part of their interest in asserting private ownership over our public resource. If we fail to place controls on the water-for-sale industry now, we will allow this to continue and risk losing public control over the Great Lakes, as well as decisions on how our water is used and whether it is protected.

Solution: Pass the Great Lakes, Great Michigan platform

Michigan has already demonstrated leadership in regulating bottled water, and passing this legislation will add crucial protections. We are a natural destination for this industry, given our geography. We must remain vigilant and demand effective oversight as we move toward a future where demand for fresh water resources will only increase.



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