

## Water stirs passion, concern of former ABA president

By Leonard Novarro  
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Simon Wong knows his water.

The owner of a San Diego civil and structural engineering firm can rattle off the percentage of upstream discharge in the Colorado River, what percentage of the overall water supply is used locally by the biotech industry, how much of our water is imported and how much is recycled: 28, 10, 80-85 and 2 percent.

Our main water supply, the Colorado River, concerns him the most. "The river is full of effluent, and we're at the end of the pipeline. I have a passion for water and water issues. It's important, if not for this generation, for the future generations of San Diego," says Wong, father of two sons, Marcus, 16, and Matthew, 14.

Last month, Wong made his voice heard, as part of a 35-person citizens panel examining water re-use options. The panel unanimously endorsed a controversial plan to recycle highly treated wastewater and add it to the region's reservoir supply that eventually makes it to the household tap. The proposal would cost \$210 million.

Another option would use recycled water for irrigation and industrial purposes only.

In either case, the panel considers advanced treated water to be of a much higher quality than water coming from the Colorado River or the state's aqueduct system.

The San Diego City Council's natural resources committee will review the recommendations and eventually report

back to the full council.

The entire water issue leaves a lot of room for misunderstanding, according to Wong.

Water, once treated, will be equal to the Colorado River water we get now.

"I know something about water treatment. But for a lot of people, recycled water means one thing," said Wong, referring to the recycled wastewater proposal dubbed "toilet to tap" several years ago.

But, believes Wong, "high filtration can make water potable (drinkable) in many ways."

The priority is to secure a dwindling water supply. The issue, said Wong, should resonate in the Asian community, which owns a lot of restaurants and small businesses. "They use a lot of water. We want to make sure they have enough and that the water (the customer gets) is good quality." And, he added: "We want to make sure the bill is not sky high."

Wong was invited to be part of the panel because of his engineering background and past presidency of the Asian Business Association of San Diego. Other participants included developers, landscapers, real estate professionals, environmentalists, community planners and community leaders.



Simon Wong