

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

July 29, 2006

Another view of 'toilet to tap'

Regarding “Yuck!/San Diego should flush 'toilet to tap' plan” (Editorial, July 24):

As a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects in San Diego, we believe the Union-Tribune has failed to disclose important facts regarding the discussion of augmenting reservoirs with highly treated wastewater. The “potential risky” water you describe being returned to our reservoirs will actually be cleaner and safer than the raw water that comes to us from the Colorado River and Northern California.

The raw water we import includes nearly 1,000 treated sewage discharges upstream of San Diego. Why is that water considered safe but augmenting our reservoirs with more highly treated and cleaner water is not?

When comparing other alternative water supply options to reservoir augmentation, all costs need to be considered. For example, reclaimed wastewater for landscape irrigation purposes is available in greatest quantities during the winter but can't be used because landscapes generally don't need to be watered in the winter. Also, we need to factor in the redundant piping system and costs to large land owners to retrofit their irrigation to be able to use the water. Once all of these public and private costs, along with the limited season of use are evaluated, this alternative may not be as cost-effective as it appears.

Our region needs a number of water supply sources to meet our future needs so we can become both ecologically and economically sustainable. Along with the entire landscape industry, we share a significant role in this issue due to the fact that outdoor water use represents about half of the water used in the county.

Good science and facts should be what influences decisions regarding our future water supplies; not a fabricated “yuck” factor. Keep reservoir augmentation open as a viable option.

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