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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Backpedaling Water Options

By Dr. Scott T. Kelley, North Park

**Tuesday, July 7, 2009** | As a professor of Microbiology and a concerned citizen of San Diego, I am extremely concerned about the [reports Councilor Lightner has had a change of mind](#) concerning the City's water reclamation plan. We have a serious and growing water crisis in the San Diego region and this plan is incredibly important to our region's water security. I have looked at the plans in detail and I know that the water we will be getting from this proposal will be significantly cleaner than our current water sources.

Remember, our current water source is already sewage contaminated from the run-off of upstream cities and is not nearly as heavily treated and filtered as the reclaimed water will be. People may think that desalination is safer option, but the ocean is loaded with bacteria that needs to be removed. With desalination, you not only have to get rid of the bacteria and virus, as with reclamation, but you also have to deal with all the salt making the process much more expensive and energy intensive. And if energy prices take off again, desalination becomes even more expensive.

I am not arguing against desalination; we will probably need that too along with much tighter water restrictions and loads of xeriscaping. However, we cannot afford to miss out on any source of water, especially from the relatively cheap and clean source provided by reclamation. San Diego will need every possible source of water in the future given our continuing drought, population growth and climate change.

People are afraid of this plan because of the psychological "yuck" factor: there is no scientific reasoning behind this fear. I hope the City Council members and the mayor are able to see past the temporary political ramifications and see the larger picture for the citizens of San Diego. We have a crisis here and we need intelligent and brave leadership to secure this most precious resource for future San Diegans.

*Dr. Scott T. Kelley is the Associate Professor of Microbiology at San Diego State University*

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