

Beware Nestlé

By Philip Heldrich

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McCloud, Calif. -

Dear Editor,

Last week I wrote to McCloud about how Nestlé Waters sought a long-term lease to one of my town's most productive springs. I am a college professor at the University of Washington, Tacoma and I live in Orting, WA, near Mt. Rainier. My small town (pop. 6,000) is best known for our endangered salmon.

Our community is facing tough economic times and seems willing to do most anything for big money. Our mayor fell for Nestlé's Faustian bargain. Dave Palais promised 50 jobs and millions in utility and development dollars. The deal was fool's gold. Nestlé wanted a private pipeline to our municipal water, the people's water. Our city consultant said 22.21% of our city's total water rights would go to Nestlé. Nestlé planned 24/7 trucking adjacent to three schools. There would be air and effluent pollution from plastic bottle production.

Nestlé planned to use more water during our yearly May to October drought, when our salmon need the water most. Just a few dry summers ago, we experienced water rationing here. Our city only heard Nestlé talk about the gold while playing us for fools. This year we have a snow pack below normal. With global climate change, predictions are for less snow pack in the future, making water conservation for people and wildlife a top priority now.

An exclusive long-term lease would have given the people's municipal water to Nestlé for generations to come. It would have been ethically irresponsible, negligent and reckless.

We've learned again in this recession that we can not trust big money to make wise decisions. We must protect municipal water supplies against gross profiteering even when our communities face tough times.

Join me and others countrywide in telling corporate bottlers to leave our towns immediately. Save water for life, not profit.