

BOTTLED WATER BACKLASH

There's "water, water everywhere" but is any of it environmentally sustainable to drink? The most recent backlash against the bottled water industry is the revelation that Pepsi's Aquafina and Coke's Dasani bottled water are actually tap water (you can read a "Democracy Now" transcript on this issue at www.alternet.org/environment/58604/).

Pepsi, whose previous Aquafina slogan was "So pure, we promise nothing," has begun a campaign to heighten its "7-step purification process" and downplay its new tap water image. Pepsi has agreed to include the words "public water source" on Aquafina labels.

The bottled water backlash has also involved the revelation that bottled water is no healthier than tap water. A study put out by the Natural Resources Defense Council showed that while the Environmental Protection Agency demands that big city tap water be tested 100 times or more a month for bacteria, the Food and Drug Administration demands only weekly testing for bottled water. Yet consumers pay more per gallon for bottled water than they do for gasoline.

Even bottled water from "natural springs" has its problems. A popular water like Evian, which comes from source near Lake Geneva in Central Europe, must be transported thousands of miles to get to consumers in the U.S. Making the bottles themselves also uses massive amounts of fossil fuels — enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year, according to the Earth Policy Institute.

But just when you thought the safest and most eco-friendly thing to do was carry your tap water (Eugene's comes from the McKenzie River) in one of those ubiquitous Nalgene bottles, think again.

Although a panel convened by the National Toxicology Program downplayed the possible danger of a compound called bisphenol A (BPA) found in plastics used to make Nalgene bottles as well as baby bottles, other scientists disagree.

An independent panel of scientists concluded that BPA, which is now found in the blood of most Americans, may play a role in "prostate and breast cancer, urogenital abnormalities in male babies, a decline in semen quality in men, early onset of puberty in girls, metabolic disorders including insulin-resistant (type 2) diabetes and obesity, and neurobehavioral problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder."

Aside from water bottles, BPA is also

Since the U.S. invasion began on March 20, 2003
(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- 3,689 U.S. troops killed* (3,676)
- 27,279 U.S. troops injured* (26,558)
- 292 Coalition troops killed* (292)
- 417 contractors killed** (414)
- 75,723 Iraqi civilians killed*** (74,927)
- \$451.7 billion cost of war (\$449.7 billion)

* through Aug. 13, 2007; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly

** estimate; source: icasualties.org
*** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 to one million

found in products ranging from dental fillings to Coca-Cola containers. An article at Green Guide (www.thegreenguide.com/doc/114/bpa) gives hints about avoiding BPA, such as washing a Nalgene bottle by hand and not in the dishwasher and not using bottles that are cracked or cloudy. Drink up!

— Camilla Mortensen



OPEN FORUM ON BROADWAY

Eugene architect Art Paz and other leaders of Eugene's urban design community will offer their perspectives on West Broadway redevelopment at a public forum at 7 pm Thursday, Aug. 16, at EWEB's meeting room, 500 E. 4th Ave.

The topic is "What Does Our Community Want For The West Broadway Redevelopment?" and discussion will be facilitated by Rob Handy, board member of Citizens for Public Accountability and a member of the West Broadway Advisory Committee. For more information, visit www.lanecpa.org/cpa

• The Eugene City Council Aug. 13 took a big step toward authorizing **urban renewal funds** for subsidizing private redevelopment of the West Broadway blocks downtown. But a ballot initiative is now in the works to stop it. During the testimony Monday night, Sundance Natural Foods owner Gavin McComas told the councilors that he will, "acting on behalf of a group of concerned citizens and fellow retailers, begin a petition drive to place this issue on the ballot."

Most Eugeneans would like to see our downtown recover more quickly from decades of bad planning, but one of the most basic questions regarding the latest redevelopment plans has not been adequately addressed: Should taxpayers provide subsidies for private development to the detriment of established local businesses? McComas says he supports spending urban renewal money for a new library, a new City Hall, the restoration of historic buildings, affordable housing downtown, a new hospital or "any number of other projects that are clearly of benefit to the general public."

But of course nothing involving public-private partnerships is ever simple. Do we derail a major development in a blighted area of downtown before we've even seen the plans, before we know more clearly what the city's commitment will be, before we know the impact on established businesses? Are there ways urban renewal funds can be used to provide public amenities to complement commercial redevelopment? A lot of public input is going into trying to make this project work for Eugene. Let's gather more information before we as a community decide to kill it.

• Good news from the **Eugene Planning Commission** this week on its recommendation that McKenzie-Willamette/Triad be denied its siting of a major medical center in a rural area north of Eugene, far from the city's population center, and at the end of a busy highway already prone to congestion. The development now goes to the City Council for a decision that could go either way, and that decision will likely advance to the state Land Use Board of Appeals. The obstacles facing McKenzie-Willamette seem formidable, but as we've noted before in this column, just about anything can be built in this county if the developers have enough money and lawyers. In this case we think it's time for McKenzie-Willamette to look for a new and better site for a hospital. The available sites might not have the sex appeal of a golf course next to a river, but that's not what medical care is all about. A major medical center, with all the infrastructure and supporting offices and businesses that go with it, should be accessible to its patients and their families, doctors and employees. Let's revisit the fairgrounds.

• It's a little crazy that Gov. Ted Kulongoski and former Gov. Barbara Roberts are **picking their Dem candidate** to run against Gordon Smith nearly nine months before the 2008 May primary. Leaders usually stay out of their primary as long as they can, but the announcement came out this week that the present and former guys are signing on now with Jeff Merkley over Steve Novick and other candidates. Money rules, of course. Novick has been making money calls since *Willamette Week* put him on their cover, and Merkley just announced, so he's behind in the game. Because the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee with its big pockets helped to recruit Merkley, Oregon Democrats need to prove his financial viability out here to the DSCC. Hence, the governors lend their credibility. But we want to wait and see, watch both guys and any others who want to run, listen to at least one "debate" and refuse to be rushed into picking our candidate to take on Smith. Should be interesting.

• On **EW! A blog** this week: Molly handily lists links to all the Booker Prize longlisted titles, so you don't have to hunt through the Internet yourself; Suzi starts up a daily newsroll of interesting tidbits from hither and yon — and watches way too many Shakespeare adaptations for one person in one week; Chuck discusses the ability to vote on animatronic dinos at the Oregon Zoo; we hate bad fonts; Camilla covers the Monday night gas leak on High Street. And that's just by Tuesday morning! More to come, as always. Get to our blog through our website or bookmark blogs.eugeneweekly.com

• What can we say about **Karl Rove** other than he was one of the most divisive and destructive forces in modern American politics? But even more disturbing is the fact that he was able to take advantage of our national weaknesses: fear and religious bigotry. What will Bush do without him? The pattern has been set; don't expect anything to change. Turd Blossom will be whispering in George's ear until the very end, or at least leaving behind detailed (but no longer effective) instructions on how to manipulate and obfuscate Congress and the American people. What will the Republican Party do without him? Let's hope the GOP recognizes the damage and vows to never again revert to short-term Rovian tactics. Eventually, people wise up.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com

