

Hidden Cost of Bottled Water



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By: Zoë
Fahy

Bottled water
could not be
a more
perfect
example of
how the most

environmentally sustainable behaviors and the most cost-effective are often one in the same. As someone who has recently entered into the field of financial literacy after years of studying the environment and human culture, I'm fascinated by this intersection. Take a look at the following calculation originally hashed out by one of my favorite financial bloggers, G.E Miller, and tell me you're not geeking out too.

The average person should consume 64 ounces of water per day. If you're a bottled water drinker, that chucks up to slightly less than three 20-ounce bottles of water per day. This costs you three dollars per day, or \$1,095 per year. The same bottles filled with tap water costs you 48 cents per year. This means that when you buy a single bottle of water, you have already spent double the cost of an entire year of tap water.

In Kittitas County, and in the United States at large, we enjoy a high-quality,

healthy municipal water supply. In fact, tap water is held to higher regulatory standards under the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) than tap water under the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). Tap water also comes with greater transparency in reporting. Municipal water suppliers are required to release detailed consumer reports on water quality, obligations private bottling companies are exempt from.

Personal cost aside, bottled water produces up to 1.5 million tons of plastic waste per year. According to Food and Water Watch, that plastic requires up to 47 million gallons of oil per year to produce, and is recycled only 20 percent of the time.

Tap water is cheaper, more environmentally sustainable, and often healthier, so I'll leave you with something sweet to ponder as you sip: what will you do with that extra \$1,095 dollars?

Zoë Fahy served as the financial literacy coordinator at HopeSource in Ellensburg through the Washington Service Corps. Tell us what you think by filling out a survey at hopesource.us.