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POLLUTION PREVENTION VIEW

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NEWSLETTER FROM THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Turning Back to the Tap

It seems like vending machines are replacing water fountains in many buildings and public spaces, and single-serve bottles are taking the place of pitchers of water at meetings. Use of bottled water has increased dramatically since 1991 and now more than 73 billion single-use bottles are sold in the U.S. each year — enough to circle the Earth over 370 times!

Water is a necessity of life but our increased dependence on bottled water is causing many harmful environmental impacts. Petroleum products are used to manufacture and transport the bottles — yet less than 25% of the bottles are recycled, with countless ending up as plastic pollution in our waterways and oceans.

The good news is that communities, agencies, and schools around the country are taking action to break the bottled water habit. They are encouraging everyone to “turn back to the tap.” Water flowing from your faucet is subject to stricter safety regulations than bottled water — and it’s a lot cheaper. Bottled water costs from 89 cents to more than \$8.00 per gallon compared to only a tenth of a cent per gallon for tap water.

One example of a school in Connecticut that is committed to reducing the use of disposable water bottles is **Middlesex Community College** (MxCC). Last year, the College installed “filling stations” in all their campus buildings. These stations provide chilled and filtered tap water and are designed to easily fill reusable bottles — but you can also drink from them like a water fountain. An interesting feature on each station is the digital read-out that keeps track of how many bottles have been filled — totaling more than 40,000 for the first year! MxCC President Anna Wasescha says that the College strives to model sustainable practices that students can carry into their daily lives outside of campus. She has seen a noticeable increase in students carrying the reusable bottles (which are now available at the MxCC bookstore). And at every filling station, posters created by design students help to educate people about breaking the bottled water habit. The College is planning to install another station outside of their multi-purpose room to allow pitchers to be easily filled for public events and meetings.

For a step-to-step guide to *Breaking the Bottled Water Habit in Your Community*, visit newamericandream.org.



The water stations at Middlesex Community College make it easy to fill reusable bottles.

Going for a Swim?



Before heading out to one of Connecticut's beautiful state beaches, you'll probably want to know, *How's the Water?* You will have to dip your toes in to test the temperature, but beforehand you can check the current water quality on [CT DEEP's website](#). Water is tested weekly from Memorial Day through Labor Day at the state's 23 swimming areas. Town beaches are tested by your [local health department](#).

Water sampling is one of the tools used by public health and environmental protection officials to evaluate potential contamination and to make beach closure decisions. Pathogens may be present due to a number of reasons, such as sewer overflows, leaking septic tanks, or boats dumping sewage directly into the water. Heavy rain also contributes to water pollution since it picks up bacteria as it washes over the land and ends up in the water. Animal waste from dogs and birds is yet another source of pathogens. If the water looks murky, it could be an [algae bloom](#).

There are a few easy things you can do to help keep our swimming beaches and other water areas from becoming polluted: —

- Always pick up your pet's waste and dispose of it in a trash can.
- Don't leave anything on the beach. Throw away your trash and recycle the rest.
- Avoid over-fertilizing or using pesticides on your lawn.
- Don't pour anything down the storm drain — it will end up in a stream, river, or Long Island Sound.
- Boaters should use [pump-out stations or boats](#) to dispose of all boat sewage. Don't dump in the water.

Follow Connecticut state parks on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or download the [CT Parks Outdoor Guide Mobile App](#). Get info on parking availability so you can avoid driving to a park that has reached capacity.

Buying a Better Way

Purchasing healthier, environmentally preferable products (EPPs) is a better choice for everyone. CT DEEP recently held a workshop on *Choosing “Green” Products from State Contracts* to help purchasing agents at state agencies, municipalities, and school districts find these products. The State has substantial buying power so having these products on state contract means getting the best value at competitive prices. Many agencies including non-profit organizations can use the state contracts. **EPPs on state contract** include paper and plastic items made with recycled content, energy-efficient equipment, lighting and vehicles, low VOC and recycled content paints, “green” cleaners and more.

The workshop focused on office supplies and hardware supplies. If given the choice, would you buy Post-It Notes made with recycled paper or with virgin paper? Would you buy markers with a strong odor and containing toxic chemicals or would you purchase non-toxic ones? Would you choose a paper cup over a Styrofoam one? The attendees learned about the harmful impacts of these seemingly benign supplies on health and the environment and the benefits to choosing “greener” items. Five businesses (**C&C Janitorial, EBP, Grainger, Staples and Suburban Stationers**) displayed their EPPs and provided information on how to find these products in their catalogs.

The main speaker was Alicia Culver from the Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN). RPN is an organization dedicated to sustainable purchasing, and has many helpful guides on their [website](#). The workshop presentations and EPP purchasing information is available at www.ct.gov/deep/p2 — **How to Green Your CT State Agency**.

Drive Clean, Save Green

Cars and trucks are responsible for much of Connecticut’s “home grown” air pollution (40% of Connecticut’s overall greenhouse gas emissions and about 49% of **Nitrogen Oxides**, a primary ingredient of smog). One of the best ways to drive down air pollution is to drive the least polluting, most fuel-efficient vehicle that fits your needs, and to be aware of your driving habits.

Currently, the most energy-efficient vehicles on the market are **electric vehicles** or “EVs.” One of Connecticut’s many EV dealers can help you determine whether an electric vehicle will suit your personal or fleet needs. If not, the next best option would be to consider either EPA **SmartWay Certified** or **SmartWay Elite Certified** vehicles. These vehicles are among the cleanest on the road and offer high fuel efficiency models. Many popular makes and models are SmartWay cars, so it is easy to choose one that fits your needs.



Cars and trucks are responsible for much of CT’s air pollution.

The **fuel economy and environment label** is another way to find a cleaner car. The label is displayed prominently on new car price stickers; it has been updated to provide ratings on smog and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as MPG estimates and annual fuel costs. For more information, check out EPA’s **Green Vehicle Guide** and www.fueleconomy.gov.

Not in the market for a new car? You can still drive “cleaner.” Properly inflate your tires and be aware of your speed; for every 5 miles per hour you drive over 65 mph it’s like spending 20 cents more per gallon of gas. **Not idling** also reduces air pollution and saves gasoline. Last but not least, *drive less — you’ll save more*. Combine your errands and whenever possible, take the bus, walk, bike, or carpool — you will be helping the environment while saving gas and wear and tear on your vehicle.

Ask Eartha

I'm concerned about the antibiotics given to farm animals. I've read that these could contribute to antibiotic-resistant superbugs in humans. Should I avoid meat? Liz S., Windsor

There are a lot of environmental reasons to consider avoiding meat and dairy. According to **Environmental Working Group** (EWG) growing feed for livestock uses 165 million lbs. of pesticides and 17 billion lbs. of fertilizer each year in the U.S. alone. Runoff from this contributes to pollution of our rivers, groundwater, and oceans. EWG also reports that manure from U.S. feedlots is 500 million pounds per year — three times what all humans produce — and causes water and air pollution, including the leaching of antibiotics.

Antibiotics — the miracle drugs of our parents and grandparents — are now unable to fight off some pathogens. Scientists have documented that antibacterial resistance happens both in the medical setting and on food-producing farms — but farms use more. Some **80% of antibiotics sold in the U.S.** are used for livestock, both to reduce disease in the confined animal feedlot operations (CAFO) as well as to fatten livestock faster so they can be brought to market sooner.

Overuse of antibiotics for farm animals allows some genetically resistant strains of bacteria to survive the antibiotics. These antibiotic resistant

(AR) bacteria are then able to multiply and be transmitted through meat and dairy products, and to other farm animals, food workers, and to vegetables and fruits from animal manure. From all of these sources AR bacteria can go on to infect the public and ecosystems.

The **Centers for Disease Control** reports that each year two million people get seriously ill from infections caused by AR bacteria and 23,000 deaths are directly caused by AR pathogens.

Another source of AR bacteria in our food comes from applying inadequately cured manure on vegetable and fruit farms — it can end up in the soil and the produce grown in it. Also, AR bacteria can't be removed from wastewater from sewage treatment plants and drinking water may also harbor this bacteria.

Some things to do:

1. Eat less meat and dairy. Check out the **Meat Eater's Guide to Climate and Health**.
2. Purchase certified organic meats and dairy products when possible.



3. Purchase meat and dairy products labeled “grown without antibiotics.” Check out the **CT Department of Agriculture** list of local farms selling beef, poultry, lamb, and dairy for meat grown without antibiotics.
4. Purchase vegetables and fruits from local sources and know your farmer's practices. Or plant your own gardens.
5. Encourage and/or follow **proper use of antibiotics** in agricultural and medical settings.

Eartha

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to **judith.prill@ct.gov** and watch future issues for your answer.

Don't be a Drip — Fix that Leak! DIY tips at www.epa.gov/watersense.



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