

# Leave the water bottle at home

## University may install water filtration systems

by Amanda Chan

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To quench ASU's thirst to become more environmentally friendly, University officials are targeting bottles of water to cut down on waste.

ASU is considering installing filtered water stations around campus to minimize waste associated with plastic water bottles, said Bonny Bentzin, manager of University Sustainability Practices.

The filtered water stations would model those found at local grocery stores, which consist of a tap that dispenses filtered water, Bentzin said. Use of the stations would be offered for a small fee, although a price has not been determined yet.

Users would provide their own bottles to fill with the water, she said.

"What a great service this would be to offer to the community," Bentzin said. "It would really help to cut back on plastic bottle waste."

In 2006, Americans used 33.7 billion disposable water bottles 1.5 liters or smaller, according to the Beverage Marketing Corp., a company that monitors consumer trends in the beverage industry. The 2006 figure is an 18 percent increase from the amount in 2005, he said.

The life cycle of a bottle of water involves the pumping and treatment of water, the packaging into bottles, the shipping and the distribution, which all leave a very large "ecological footprint," she said.

An ecological footprint is a measurement of humans' use of the Earth's resources compared to how quickly the Earth can replenish them, according to the Global Footprint Network Web site.

While ASU doesn't have an idea on how much it would cost to make these filtered water stations a reality, Bentzin said there are a number of issues to consider before ASU can take a step toward their purchase or development.

Health issues must be taken into consideration, Bentzin said, since the water stations that already exist at grocery stores are known for being dirty.

Also, the federal government requires water to go through a filtration treatment before being dispensed, which would make the water warm, she said.

"It's hot outside, and I don't think anyone would want to drink hot water—we want chilled water, and chilled water is a main way of keeping us cool during these hot months," Bentzin said.

The University needs to find a method of chilling the water before it's dispensed from the tap while still following the government standards of filtration, she said.

Also, the logistics of already-existing water stations only provide users with set amounts of water, most of them being one-gallon quantities, she said.

"We are trying to find a way to retrofit these stations so we could fill up three different sizes," Bentzin said.

Currently, ASU provides seven "Mother Earth" water stations around campus, but they only dispense the one-gallon quantities, said John Riley, ASU purchasing director.

"We have not yet found any other companies that would dispense water in other sizes, so we need to find out how to vend in smaller sizes, such as the common one-liter sizes," Riley said.

The search for the perfect water filtration system becomes a cost benefit analysis, where it's necessary to weigh the costs of having to recycle to the costs of the machine, he said.



Jeffrey Lowman / THE STATE PRESS

**RECYCLE OVERLOAD:** A trash can is filled to the max with reusable plastics on Thursday. ASU is making an effort to reduce the number of reusable water bottle thrown away on campus.

Although these filtered water stations are not yet a reality, some students are keen to the idea.

"Having filtered water [stations] on campus is a fantastic idea," said Hayley Kosan, an undeclared freshman. "It's definitely a way to save money, since it seems like everything is so expensive already."

Jentry Yard, a biology junior, said she would use the water stations if the University installed them.

"I usually bring two water bottles to campus every day, and it would be more beneficial just to use the water stations," she said.

It's a good alternative to using multiple water bottles every day, and would save her money as well, she said.

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