

**About the Author**

Glenn Land is the founder and president of Aduk, Inc. He may be reached at 276-773-2097; glenn@aduk-ete.com

By Glenn Land, Aduk, Inc.

**EDITOR'S EMPHASIS**

**C**ontrary to what some parties would have us believe, water, like air, is a human need and a human right. Water and air represent common denominators of all life on this planet. Indeed water and air are part of the common heritage of humanity. The level of responsibility governments will shoulder for protecting these rights remains to be seen. We recognize pollution levels of air. Groundwater and aquifers have been called a ticking chemical time bomb. The freshwater crisis is clear and well documented. Avoiding this crisis will require accountable governance with an international legal framework focused on conservation and long-term sustainability of water resources.

**Water Rights**

The issue at hand is how water rights will be treated in the future. Will governments protect or relinquish them? Will water rights be protected as part of the global commons or, like oil, be relinquished? What are the advantages and disadvantages? How might they be protected? How might they be relinquished? What are the short- and long-term implications? If they are relinquished, will special interest and lobbying be taken to a whole new level?

# A Solid Future for POU Water Purification

Industry professionals are responsible for bringing greater awareness of water quality to government officials and the public

**Responsibility**

While concern over this issue may or may not be warranted, one thing is for sure: Point-of-use (POU) water purification has a solid future. The relatively new POU industry will have to shoulder tremendous responsibility. Serious issues of water quality as well as quantity are apparent. Pollution is contaminating available natural sources of water, and growing dependency on groundwater and aquifers is depleting these resources faster than nature can replenish them. (In fact, per capita use of water is increasing at more than twice the rate of human population growth.) Growing awareness by consumers will

demand that the POU industry accept increased responsibility for both the quality and quantity of water supplies.

It has become painfully clear that a sustainable economy without a sustainable environment is just not possible. The POU industry can support a sustainable environment by providing technology that does not produce wastewater or non-reusable plastic containers. Desirable approaches of the future may include the following.

- Governments will proactively enact legislation to protect water rights and water resources from further contamination and support reclamation projects.
- Private companies will provide watershed management and water transport services.
- Drinking water will be purified at the point of use.

- City and municipal utilities will treat water for all uses except drinking water.

The right of every human to water must be proactively protected if an acceptable quality of life for future generations is to be reasonably assured. This will not happen until it becomes a high priority political issue. It won't become a political issue until it becomes a popular issue. Elected officials simply do not address unpopular or conflicting issues head-on until they are left with no other choice. Unfortunately, because current economic models emphasize the principals of profit with minimal concern for environmental issues, governments throughout the world have primarily responded to the protection of this right by passing the buck.

As long as water contamination is not a highly visible issue, it is unlikely that voters will force the issue. But the scientific community, educators, international agencies and news media are rapidly making this issue a much more visible one. This growing awareness on the part of consumers likely will result in intensifying political pressure on governments as well as increasing expectations for the POU industry.

Regardless of the outcome, the POU water purification industry is assured of a solid future.



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AA, ICP method information from: "Arsenic in Drinking Water: Analytical Methods", www.epa.gov/safewater/ars/ars7.html, updated 07/03/2002

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