

## SAN FRANCISCANS FOR SAFE QUALITY WATER

### FACT SHEET: NO GROUNDWATER FOR SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco takes pride in its pure, safe Hetch Hetchy drinking water from Yosemite. But in April, the SFPUC began “blending” in groundwater from the Westside Basin Aquifer. This lower quality, contaminated groundwater receives only minimal treatment. The SFPUC states that the groundwater is safe. They claim it’s another source of water in case of drought, earthquakes or other supply disruptions and will help accommodate future population growth. **These claims hide the real facts.**

#### Contaminants in Our Groundwater Pose Health Risks

Tests of our groundwater show unsafe levels of nitrates, manganese, and radioactive radon-222. These can increase our risk for cancer or cause serious disease and birth defects. Many more contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products, herbicides and pesticides are also found in our groundwater. Thousands of these chemicals are not regulated. The cumulative risks or adverse interactions of multiple pollutants in our water has not been evaluated.

#### Regulations for Drinking Water Are Flawed

The San Francisco Public Health Department (SFPHD) claims that using groundwater “will not create any adverse health consequences.” The SFPUC and the SFPHD believe that the legal limits set by the US EPA and the State Water Resources Control Board for contaminants in water protect public health. The legal limits for 40% of regulated contaminants are set higher than health-based limits because the costs of removing them must be considered. Current limits don’t consider vulnerable populations – children, the elderly, pregnant women or the immunocompromised – who are more sensitive to much lower concentrations of contaminants.

#### It’s Not an Emergency Supply

Adding groundwater to our Hetch Hetchy supply will only provide us with 11 days of drinking water in an emergency. After that, a “Do Not Drink” order would be mandatory because our groundwater is too contaminated to drink.

## Conservation and Efficiency Work

Conservation and efficiency are the most affordable and sustainable measures to maintain our safe drinking water supplies, even with periods of drought. We know how to conserve and are using about 61 million gallons a day (mgd), which is 20 mgd less than the SFPUC's goal, even as our population grew by 15% from 2005 – 2016. In addition, we lose 10% of our water every day due to leaking and broken pipes. If we simply stop this loss, we have no need ever for polluted groundwater. In addition, there are significant, sustainable gains through improved efficiency, such as low-flow technologies.

## We Were Never Told

The public was not informed and was deliberately misled by the SFPUC in 2002 when the Proposition A Water Bond asked for funds to be used for water quality improvements. No mention was ever made that \$66 million would be spent on developing groundwater for drinking. Adding polluted groundwater isn't our idea of improving the quality of our drinking water.

Had we known, Prop A would never have passed!

## A Better Use For Groundwater

The SFPUC is using drinking water for firefighting, street cleaning and irrigating our parks. Groundwater should be used instead for these purposes.

- **No polluted groundwater in our drinking water, ever! It's not safe, it's not healthy and it's not necessary.**
- **The SFPUC needs to find a better alternative to supply us with emergency drinking water. Other communities have a plan in place – the SFPUC needs to do the same.**
- **Use our groundwater, not our drinking water for irrigation and street cleaning.**

For more information, go to: [www.sfsafewatercoalition.com](http://www.sfsafewatercoalition.com)

