

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Sustainable Purchasing Case Studies

Multnomah Building 4th Floor Takes Back the Tap



By the Numbers

14

The number of months for the water station to reach payback*

9084

The equivalent number of 16 oz water bottles saved from the landfill in the first five months since installation

1135

The number of gallons dispensed from the filling station in 5 months

\$4.13

The cost to the County for 1135 gallons of water

\$942

The equivalent cost for bottled water service (1135 gallons)

Bottled Water Facts

Tap water is subject to more stringent testing requirements than bottled water.

The production and distribution of water bottles consume large amounts of energy.

Many of the 5 gallon water jugs contain BPA, a chemical added to plastic that has been linked to cancer.

The 5 gallon water jugs must be washed and sanitized inside and out, consuming water and detergent.



Opportunities for Sustainability



Multnomah County affirmed its commitment to environmental responsibility, sound business practices by changing our policies related to bottled water and by asking its employees to join the campaign to “Take Back the Tap.”

In December 2010, the Multnomah Building 4th Floor installed a new combination water filter/water filling station. The new station has a meter that estimates how many 8 ounce plastic water bottles have been kept out of the landfill.

Previously, a small group of employees on the 4th Floor had been participating in a bottled water club: contributing their own funds for bottled water delivery. The club was paying \$0.83 gallon for water that had been taken from Portland’s own Bull Run watershed; processed, packaged and transported to the Multnomah Building. Driven by its own sustainability policies the County realized that it could help reduce the economic and environmental impacts associated with bottled water service and in turn provide access to free, clean drinking water for **all** employees while supporting the County’s bottled water ban and **Take Back the Tap** campaign.

Sustainability Factors

Environmental

Reduces the environmental impact of bottled water service for the 4th floor. Bottled water production and transport uses as much as 2,000 times more energy than it takes to produce tap water.

Social

Getting enough water every day is important for your health and Multnomah County is committed to ensuring access to safe, free tap water for employees to drink. (almost 200 employees work on the 4th floor alone!)

Economic

Supports municipal water systems
Saves money (compared to bottled water service)



* Comparing the cost of installation with the equivalent cost of bottled water service