



STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Board Members
FROM: Mark Foree, General Manager
DATE: January 11, 2010
SUBJECT: Report on Water Quality

Discussion

This report is in response to the report published by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) and the New York Times (NYT) last month regarding tap water quality. These reports ranked the water quality of the 100 largest water systems in the country and rated Reno's water quality very low. We contacted EWG and requested that they send us the data that was used in their analysis/report and late last month we received the requested data.

We can now comment in more detail regarding the many things that were wrong with their report in relation to TMWA's drinking water. First and foremost, EWG did not contact us to verify any data or explain how our production, treatment and delivery system is operated prior to publishing the report. Some of the errors or misrepresentations are as follows:

- Some of the data was just wrong – probably data entry errors on 2005 sample data provided to EWG by the state of Nevada. Some data that was used was from wells that were not used during the period of time stated. Some samples (contaminant concentrations) were double counted. There were numerous errors in the data that was used.
- EWG used values for samples taken upstream of PCE treatment facilities in their report – water that is not delivered to customers. All samples taken downstream of PCE treatment facilities were non-detect for PCE and TCE. A few other non-treated wells have very small concentrations of PCE (and one had a very low concentration of TCE) but all were well below the standard of 5 ppb.
- In calculating average contaminant concentrations, EWG did not consider the fact that 85-90 percent of our total water supply comes from the Truckee River – an outstanding source of water. If you do a weighted average (as you should), the average contaminant concentrations go down dramatically.
- The EWG report implied that there are some health standards we don't meet. All of our sources of supply (including all groundwater wells) meet all state and federal drinking water standards.

The above errors/discrepancies greatly overstate average contaminant concentrations – from about 3 times actual for arsenic concentrations to about 100 times actual for PCE concentrations. The attached table shows actual concentrations of some contaminants versus what was reported by EWG and NYT.

We are providing corrected and additional data to the Environmental Working Group and also to the New York Times because we would like to have any data that is out there to be factual data, whether or not it is coming from a credible organization.

TMWA 2005 Water Quality Data vs. EWG and NYT

Contaminant	Standard	Actual Annual System Average	EWG Average	NYT Average	Actual Average % of standard
Arsenic, ppb*	50	2.53	7.06	7.09	5.06%
overstated by			2.8 times actual	2.8 times actual	
PCE, ppb	5	0.017	1.67	1.62	0.34%
overstated by			factor of 100	factor of 100	
TCE, ppb	5	0.002	0.13	0.08	0.04%
overstated by			65 times actual	40 times actual	
Nitrate, ppm	10	0.183	1.68	1.21	1.83%
overstated by			9 times actual	6.6 times actual	

Notes:

*Arsenic standard changed to 10 ppb on January 23, 2006.

2008 actual annual system average arsenic concentration was 1.57 ppb, or 15.7% of new standard.