

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8th, 2001

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New Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation report says economic benefits to local community from Perrier's proposal are not as lucrative as they may seem.

The Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation released its first report on Perrier's proposals in Mecosta and Osceola County entitled *Will Our Water be for Sale? A Breakdown of Economic Benefits versus Local Concerns*. Findings in this report reveal the economic benefits from a Perrier proposal to Osceola and Mecosta County citizens may not be worth the potential impacts to the area as it relates to current infrastructure and environment.

Perrier is proposing to withdraw 209,664,000 gallons of spring water per year from the Sanctuary located in Morton Township at the south end of Rodney on M20. This water will be bottled at one of three sites being considered in Mecosta Township, Morton Township or Osceola Township and then distributed throughout the Midwest. To answer the question "How much water is 209,664,000 gallons?", Ray Ribitch, a board member of MCWC and author of the report, equated it to "a body of water that's 126 acres, about the size of School Section Lake. If School Section were 5 feet 1 inch deep it would contain approximately 209,664,000 gallons."

People in Mecosta County, Morton Township, and Osceola Township overwhelmingly expressed their desire to participate in the decision making process to let Perrier set up shop in the area through petition drives. Three petition drives to overturn the rezoning of county lands from agricultural to industrial, which Perrier needed to build its bottling plants, through a referendum vote acquired up to 3 times the amount of signatures needed. The strong community interest in protecting the areas water supply and the affects of Perrier's proposal on the communities motivate MCWC to hire specialists to review potential hydrological impacts from the proposal and release this report on economic impacts as they compare to area concerns.

For a small well permit fee, Perrier will take and bottle the resource with a market value of approximately \$1,667,312,000.00 per year, each and every year, while the community benefit is only about \$36.38 per resident per year. In a letter to Senator

Emmons, a Mt. Pleasant 6th grade student said, “I know that this plan will bring jobs, but jobs can be replaced years quicker than the water can.”

Local, regional, and statewide level concerns are centered around the environment and impacts on local residents. According to Perrier hydrogeological reports the springs are connected to surface waters, and the flow to surface waters, in fact, will be diminished or reduced by over 25 percent. Questions have been raised of potential impacts to eagles, loons, recreational use of the area such as boating and fishing, wetlands, traffic concerns, pollution, schools, road conditions, congestion, right of way for farmers, soil types, wells, chemical storage, fire protection. One underlying question remains and that is “who has the right to the State’s natural resource?” Terrier Swier, President of MCWC stated “losing such a valuable resource combined with the potential negative impacts to the area for so little in return is a crime. Our water is what make this area so beautiful, it is our life.”

Cheryl Mendoza, Project Manager for the Lake Michigan Federation stated “It is encouraging to see citizens concerned about how multiple withdrawals in a watershed can combine to have a negative impact. If Michigan and the Great Lakes Basin waters are to be sustainable, we too need to look at the combined impact of numerous withdrawals on our watershed. This is the future in water management.” The Sanctuary springs that will be pumped and diverted by Perrier are tributary to the Little Muskegon River and the Muskegon River Watershed, and to the waters of Lake Michigan. In light of the recent reports of already critically low lake levels, a great deal of concern has been generated over the proposals.

Formed in December 2000, Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation has grown to over 400 members. The organization is 100% volunteer and is membership funded. Its goal is to conserve, preserve and protect Michigan’s natural resources and the public trust in those resources for the benefit of the public and to preserve and protect land use, property values, quality of life, and the public health, safety and welfare of the residents of Michigan communities. We achieve this through educating the public on the value of preservation and conservation activities and promote the protection of Michigan’s natural resources including air, water, and land protection and stewardship. Visit MCWC’s web site at www.saveMIwater.org.