

PRESENTATION

to

National Ground Water Association

by

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and

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1. **SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM:** AROUND THE WORLD WHERE 1.1 BILLION PEOPLE LACK ADEQUATE DRINKING WATER AND 2.6 BILLION PEOPLE LACK BASIC SANITATION. UNSAFE DRINKING WATER AND POOR SANITATION ADVERSELY AFFECTS THE FOLLOWING:

- a) **Health:** What we are talking about today is the most serious public health problem in the world.
 - Diseases related to inadequate water and sanitation cause 80% of the sickness in the developing world, and kill between 2 and 5 million people a year. Half the world's hospital beds are filled with people suffering from water-related sicknesses. Diseases include cholera, typhoid, guinea worm, schistosomiasis, trachoma, and nearly 90% of the diarrheal cases each year around the world.
- b) **Women and Children:**
 - The average African woman has to walk 6 kilometers a day to obtain water
 - Across the developing world, children are often kept home from school to haul water
 - The leading cause of childhood malnutrition is often not lack of food but diarrheal disease related to waterborne sickness.
- c) **Economic development:**
 - Diseases related to inadequate water and sanitation cause billions of lost workdays



- The bedrock of a country's development is access to water and sanitation: "a clean, modern water supply, working toilets, and environmental safe sewage systems are what divide the successful from the unsuccessful." (as author W. Hodding Carter has noted)

d) **Schools:**

- Half the world's schools have no access to water or sanitation, according to UNICEF
- Without access to latrines, girls reaching puberty in developing countries more likely to drop out of school.
- Waterlines, a nonprofit charity based in Santa Fe (that I am on the board of) received this unsolicited testimony from a the principal of a rural Kenyan school after the installation of a 50,000 liter watertank:

From Mr. Machuki at Shartuka Secondary School in Kilgoris Kenya:

"Before the water system was put in place, our students used to walk two kilometers to collect water for cooking, washing and bathing. . . .As a result of the water project that is now operations, i) our school discipline has improved; ii) students have enough time for studies; iii) waterborne diseases have reduced by 90%; iv) school performance on national examinations has improved because students no longer waste study time looking for water, meals are prepared in time and the enrollment has drastically increased; v) the relationship with community members who come to school for water everyday has been greatly improved."

II. **2007 OFFERS A CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM**

a) **UN Water Decade:**

- The UN has declared 2005-2015 the "International Decade for Action: Water is Life." Every government in the world—all 193 nations—have agreed to increase their efforts and funding on behalf of drinking water and sanitation for their peoples.

b) **The Millennium Development Goal:**

- To reach the goals of the UN Water Decade (and the Millennium Development Goal for Drinking Water and Sanitation), 260,000 people a day around the world must obtain water—nearly 100 million people per year. While the world is on track (barely) to achieve this objective by 2015, it lags far below the rate needed to reach the sanitation goals. To meet the sanitation goal, 370,000 people per day up to 2015 need to gain access to such improved sanitation as a private latrine. (The progress is being monitored by the Joint Monitoring Program established by UNICEF and the World Health Organization.)



c) **Climate Change:**

- The lack of adequate water and sanitation is already serious, but absent new initiatives and funding, it will become more serious given dropping aquifers, contaminated supplies, deforestation and population growth in water-stressed regions of the world. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (a joint venture of the UN Environmental Programme and the World Meteorological Organization), as well as the National Academy of Sciences, predict that global warming will cause increasing shortfalls in provision of safe drinking water supplies.

d) **Increasing Media Coverage:**

- Few days pass without an article on water in New Mexico's newspapers; in newspapers around the world, each day is seeing greater press coverage of the need for adequate water and sanitation. The urgency of the problem is being recognized like never before.

III.

PARTICULARLY HOPEFUL IS THE NEW MOMENTUM IN THE US ON BEHALF OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION WORLDWIDE. FOR EXAMPLE:

- a) **The U.S. Congress:** In November 2005, Congress with strong bipartisan leadership of Republican majority leader Bill Frist in the Senate and Oregon Democrat Rep. Earl Blumenauer passed the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005. For the first time in US history, drinking water and sanitation was recognized as being a key objective of US foreign developmental aid. A particular focus was on water for the poor—the need for humanitarian, economic, and strategic reasons to help extend safe, affordable and sustainable supplies of drinking water and adequate sanitation to those in need. This year—indeed the next few months—will be pivotal as Congress decides the extent to which to fund the Water for the Poor Act.
- b) **Civic Organizations:** Civic organizations such as Rotary International are dramatically increasing their support for clean drinking water. Recent presidents of Rotary International have asked each of Rotary's 33,000 clubs around the world to help fund a clean drinking water project with Rotary clubs in developing countries.
- c) **Corporations:** Numerous American corporations—including Coca Cola, Dow Chemical and Procter and Gamble—and significantly increasing their support for clean drinking water. Noting that most of its product is water, and calling itself 'a hydration company,' Coca Cola alone will be spending \$17 million over two years to extend better supplies of drinking water for communities in poor regions of the world.
- d) **Religious Organizations:** Faith communities have long supported individual drinking water projects abroad, for both humanitarian and spiritual reasons. Single water projects can be funded by even small congregations, and an ecumenical working group for drinking water has just been started this past year in Washington DC, connected with Church World Service.

- e) **Foundations:** American philanthropy is increasing support for clean water projects abroad, and two major donors in recent years have been the Conrad Hilton Foundation, and increasingly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- f) **New Initiatives:** The past three years have seen the launch of major new initiatives in the US designed to increase the level of American funding and advocacy for drinking water in developing countries. These include:
 1. The Millennium Water Alliance (www.mwawater.org) an unprecedented coalition of non-profit water organizations (including CARE, Water for People, WaterPartners, World Vision, Africare, Living Water, and Catholic Relief Services) who have come together for the first time to streamline the implementation and effectiveness of water projects. (Its Executive Director, Malcolm Morris, spoke at the National Ground Water Association meeting last year).
 2. Water Advocates (www.wateradvocates.org), based in Washington D.C. has become the US's first full-time advocacy organization, based in Washington DC, to lobby Congress and work with US organizations to increase funding for safe, affordable and sustainable supplies of drinking water and adequate sanitation. Water Advocates does not implement projects nor seeks contributions for itself, but rather it works to raise new funding for the water and sanitation sector. (Its President, David Douglas, had planned to be here this morning, but had to be in Washington DC last night for a Capitol Hill event for water which Water Advocates was co-sponsoring).
 3. The UN Foundation's new Global Water Challenge (www.globalwaterchallenge.org) has brought together corporations such as Coca Cola and foundations to focus on targeted approaches to the global problem, by focusing on innovative financing for new water systems, and also on the need to increase funding for water and sanitation in schools in several developing countries.

IV. **FINALLY, WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?**

As Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General, has noted, "We shall not finally defeat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria or any of the other infectious diseases that plague the developing world until we have also won the battle for safe drinking water, sanitation and basic health care."

AFTER HEARING ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM, MANY PEOPLE WANT TO RESPOND. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS FOR YOU HERE THIS MORNING TO DO SO. HERE ARE 5 SUGGESTIONS:

- 1) Sponsor an actual drinking water project with your civic organization or faith community--or with a non-profit organization like WEFTA (a few words on WEFTA?). An additional list of 30 US-based nonprofit organizations working in water overseas is listed on the website (www.wateradvocates.org) of Water Advocates
- 2) Volunteer your expertise on a short work trip with an organization that needs skilled volunteers in water and sanitation
- 3) Write one letter to your member of Congress asking for significantly increased Congressional funding for safe and affordable access to drinking water and basic sanitation for the world's poor



- 4) Visit the websites of organizations listed above to find out what more can be done
- 5) In December, 2005 the Board of Directors of the National Ground Water Association published their “Declaration of the Global Importance of Ground Water,” noting the ways “ground water holds the promise to ensure future world communities an affordable and safe water supply.” Begin to work within the NGWA to enhance the reliability and quality of the safe drinking water supplies, not only in your watershed and in your own country but worldwide.

V. **CONCLUSION:**

Clean drinking water and basic sanitation are the bedrock of any country’s development. Little works well without these basics. The problem is large but the ability to respond is within the capacity not only of every government and every organization, but every person.

Your help is needed today.

Thank you.

Presenter Biographies

This presentation was going to be given by **David Douglas**, the Chairman of the Board of Waterlines and of Water Advocates. Waterlines is a publicly funded non-profit organization incorporated since 1988 that has provided funding and technical expertise for drinking water projects in over 300 communities in fifteen countries. Particular focus is on Mexico, Panama, and Kenya. Water Advocates is the US’s first full-time advocacy organization, based in Washington DC, to lobby Congress and work with US organizations to increase funding for safe, affordable and sustainable supplies of drinking water and adequate sanitation. Water Advocates does not implement projects nor seeks contributions for itself, but rather it works to raise new funding for the water and sanitation sector.

The presentation was given by **Peter Fant**, P.E., President of Souder Miller & Associates, a New Mexico based civil and environmental engineering firm; a Board Member on Waterlines; and the Director of Water Engineers for the Americas (WEFTA), a non-profit organization that has worked on more than 30 water and wastewater projects for small communities in Mexico, Panama, Honduras, Bolivia and Peru.

