

# Charge pool owners more, NGO says

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Beijing can save at least 190 million cu m water per year - double the capacity of Guanting Reservoir - if the extravagant lifestyle of its residents can be controlled, a leading NGO said after the water price hearing yesterday.

Wang Jian, the leader of the research team at Green SOS, who has studied the water use in Beijing since the 1970s, said that the 190 million cu m water is very important due to the acute shortage of water in Beijing.

A one-year study by Green SOS, a Beijing based NGO, founded in 1996 and which has about 10,000 volunteers, shows that the current water reserves in Beijing can only support about half of its residents, and not the 17.14 million people who currently live in the city.

Wang said that with the development of the city, Beijing is attracting many rich people and lots of them have private pools which consume much more water than ordinary Beijing residents.

"That's why I hope a multi-step water price can be used in the future. It's really unfair to charge ordinary citizens and the ones who have pools at the same price," Wang told METRO.

In addition to private pools, he also suggested closing thousands of the city's bathing houses, spas and beverage factories.

"They consume a lot of water. Some of the purified water factories use 10 cu m water to produce 1 cu m water. It's inappropriate in a city which is in an acute shortage of water like Beijing," he said.

According to Green SOS research, the city consumed a total of 3.45 billion cu m water in 2008. The water used in agriculture is 1.2 billion cu m, which is down from 3.07 billion in the 1980s, so they believe the potential to save water in agriculture and industry is small.

However, about 100,000 people are employed in the city's bathing industry, which is already suffering from an increase in the price of commercial water from 61.50 yuan (\$9) cu m to 81.68 yuan cu m in November.

"The bathing industry in Beijing is a necessity to people's daily life. The development of the business links with the public demand," He Peiyun, secretary-general of the Beijing Bath Trade Association said.

"With the improvement of living standard, more and more people would like to go to spas and hot springs to enjoy themselves. And we also provide job positions to 100,000 people. We can definitely benefit society," she added.

Zhang Tong, the vice-chair of the Beijing institute of water, told Xinhua on Monday that Beijing's water supply is less than 2 percent of the national total, but it supports 1.3 percent of the population.

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