

Friends of Nature petition to the Beijing government

Friends of Nature

Saturday, June 5, 2010

Friends of Nature (FON)—China's oldest environmental organization—is hosting a Conference for the release of [their survey](#) on public opinion regarding Beijing's ongoing water crisis. As part of the conference, FON has also issued this petition to the government, calling for urgent action from officials to help increase the city's water-use efficiency and reduce pollution.

It's time to take action to build Beijing into a water-saving city

This year, as China hosts the Shanghai World Expo and today, on World Environment Day, we need to urgently ask how we can make the city of Beijing a better place to live. As part of this process, both the sustainability of China's economic and social development and Beijing's urban development need to be challenged.

With less than 300 cubic metres of water per capita, supplying only 1/30 of the world's average to its residents and only 1/8 of China's average, Beijing is one of the world's most water-starved megacities and is far below the internationally recognized water poverty line. Beijing's shortage of water has become the main factor limiting the socio-economic development of the capital city.

As early as 2005, Beijing proposed a plan to transform the municipality into a water-saving society. To achieve this goal, however, everyone must participate. Public awareness of water conservation programs and practices are crucial components for Beijing if it wants to truly become a water-efficient city.

Today, [we released a Survey](#) conducted by the Beijing-based China Mainland Marketing Research Co. which shows that 74 percent of the respondents feel the impact of Beijing's water shortage in their daily lives and know there are two problems contributing to the crisis: serious water pollution and overexploitation of groundwater. Seventy percent of respondents believe that certain uses of water—mainly in the bath, car-washing and luxury water consumption such as ski resorts, golf courses and so on so forth—are wasteful. Most of the people interviewed believe that the best way to deal with Beijing's serious water shortage is through conservation, recycling of water, and a step-metering tariff system that makes consumers pay more per unit of water as they consume more water.

On May 25, 2010, the sluices gates on three reservoirs in Hebei Province were lifted, once again, in order to channel water to Beijing. This is the second time since 2008 that water has been diverted through the Beijing-Shijiazhuang section of the yet-to-be-completed 1000-kilometre long, [South-North Water Diversion project](#) in order to maintain Beijing's water supply. But relying on diverted water is neither environmentally fair nor sustainable. The better way to deal with Beijing's water shortage is through

conservation of our water resources. Beijing must do this in order to build a water-saving city.

The 12th Five-Year Plan will be written this year, and the government of Beijing is currently seeking the public's opinion on the plan. Given this opportunity, we will submit the results of our public opinion survey to the government departments concerned. We are also urging both the government and society to take action on the following:

First, to be fully alert to the seriousness of the water crisis facing Beijing, and to take measures to curb uncontrolled urban and industrial expansion by implementing a strategy for a resource and water-saving economy.

Second, to implement the most stringent water management system that, among other goals, limits excessive groundwater extraction and permits the replenishment of groundwater reserves.

Third, to solve the water pollution problem, and return clean rivers and lakes to the people of Beijing, take drastic measures to increase the rate of sewage and wastewater treatment, including shutting down institutions that are unable to meet more stringent effluent standards.

Fourth, as the government discloses air pollution data to the public, so too should it regularly disclose data on water quality and water quantity, in an effort to promote public awareness of Beijing's water crisis. Friends of Nature stands ready to work with the government to help accomplish this goal.

Fifth, to restrict and even eliminate luxury water consumption by improving the regulations concerned, and by setting caps (or limitations) on maximum water consumption in the step-metering tariff system.

Sixth, to implement a step-metering tariff system and NDRC reforms for the disclosure of the real costs of water; to use rainfall and flood water wisely; and to expand the use of recycled water for different purposes such as irrigating the urban landscape, cleaning roads and other necessary urban environment purposes.

Finally, to quote a scholar's advice—the theme of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was "One World, One Dream"—we would like to add "One Action"! We believe Beijing has a bright future, and to build Beijing into a real water-saving city, we must take action at once and together!

Friends of Nature, On World Environment Day 2010

<http://www.probeinternational.org/beijing-water/friends-nature-petition-beijing-government>