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Timothy A. Mitchell

Director of Lynchburg Water Resources

525 Taylor Street

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Subject: Impending Water Problems in Lynchburg and the Solutions

Dear Mr. Mitchell,

I am very thankful to be living in an area whose water resource officers are so dedicated to providing clean drinking water to its residents. Even though my family has well water, in the event that we have had to get our water tested or our well checked and serviced, the employees at Lynchburg Water Resources have been more than helpful.

Unfortunately, water conservation and the availability of clean, fresh water is an issue in surrounding areas, as well as around the world, and I fear that Lynchburg could be next. In the following sections I will illustrate the problems that other areas in Virginia are facing, how other places have fixed similar problems, and how Lynchburg Water Resources can hopefully prevent any water crisis from occuring in the near future.

***Issues Around the World and in the United States***

Areas in the Middle East where the water is scarce are suffering through what has been deemed “The Water Wars”. Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Turkey, and Iraq are fighting over water rights to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. All three of these countries, as well as others, are searching for water resources for irrigation and electricity, as well as water that can be routed to other areas. Unfortunately, these countries have had some small wars due to the water shortages and I fear that places in the United States such as the mid-western states, could face similar problems in the future.

Most people have heard the phrase “water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink”, which is a huge problem faced by many countries. People can be surrounded by water, but if it is not clean and fresh, it might as well not even be there. Bangladesh suffered an incident where large amounts of arsenic was found to be in the water. People have died and are suffering serious health problems due to this issue.

Despite the United States being a well-developed, first world country, our cities are struggling to provide clean drinking water to its citizens, and our farmers irrigation systems are at risk, which could cut off a large portion of our food supply. Flint, Michigan has been without clean water for several years now, and according to the publishers of *The Climate Reality Project*, large cities such as Los Angeles, California, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Miami, Florida, are currently at risk of being the next cities whose water resources will run out (Web). People do not take into consideration that the Earth does not regenerate freshwater as fast as we are using it.

My fear is that Virginia will face similar issues in the coming years. Being a coastal state, people do not realize that water conservation and availability can still be an issue. While salt water can still provide water to certain resources such as irrigation and sewage, people are not using it for those reasons. Instead, Virginia is using its freshwater resources for most of people’s water needs.

***Water Crisis in Virginia***

States surrounding Virginia, such as West Virginia and Kentucky, can have an impact on Virginia’s water resources. According to New Hampshire Public Radio (NHPR), a chemical spill into a main river in West Virginia has caused most citizens of Charleston to use bottled water instead of their faucets (Web). Sarah Jones and Emily Atkin in their article “Rural America’s Drinking Water Crisis” bring to our attention how Kentucky’s water is often contaminated by disinfectant chemicals, causing the water to stink and look cloudy (Web). These states are right on our borders. Who is to say we are not next.

Areas such as Nelson County are still protesting the pipeline, not only because of government protest, but because it can severely damage their water supplies. *The Washington Post* states that the pipeline would run through areas that not yet have access to public water, and the pipeline could contaminate the water that people are getting out of their personal wells (Web). While the residents of the City of Lynchburg have access to the water and would not have to worry as much about the pipeline, the people in the surrounding areas of Lynchburg have a lot to lose.

In recent years there have been incidents where there has not been enough rain to sustain the water needs of certain communities. In the year 2014, the Virginia Beach area asked people not to drink the water, or even use it to wash their hands. Being less than four hours away from the coast where this water crisis is and was an issue, should scare residents and different Water Resource institutions.

***What Can We Do?***

In September of of 2018 there was a water shortage for Virginia Beach. The hotels in the area actually issued a notice to their patrons that linens will only be washed every three days or between guests. Justin Ward in his article brings to our attention that Virginia Tech is even going as far as to harvest fog in order to combat the water crisis (Web). It makes me speculate how Lynchburg can try and conserve water in different ways. If we were to collect fog, or route salt water to local farms in order to irrigate them, and even using salt water for things like flushing toilets and watering our lawns.

Thankfully, Lynchburg Water Resources is focused on recycling water so that we can reuse water for multiple purposes. Seeing how Lynchburg is taking initiative in conserving water and keeping it available to its citizens is amazing, but everything that can be done to preserve water, should be done.

***In Conclusion***

If we brought the water crisis of the world to the attention of Virginia citizens, we could create a better living environment for our children and future generations. By rationing water when we do laundry, using salt water for our frivolous water needs, and harvesting fog, we can continue living with a clean water supply that is easily available to everyone.

Sincerely,

Alana Epperson

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