



WPI

Water Wars in Maine: Nestlé vs. Fryeburg

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Abstract:

Fryeburg, ME is the site of an ongoing conflict with Nestlé Waters. This conflict concerns unfair pumping of the town's water as well as the contract between Nestlé and the town water company itself. The goal of this project is to create a compromise that allows both the town and Nestlé to prosper off the natural resources in the area while making sure that the environment as well as the community is not harmed. We are suggesting a shorter and more flexible contract that appeases both the town and Nestlé.



Background:

- Nestlé has 800 employees in Maine with an annual payroll of \$40 million.
- Nestlé drew an estimated 120 million gallons from the Wards Brook aquifer in 2012 for bottling and selling purposes.
- This past June, a petition with 136,000 signatures was submitted to Gov. Paul LePage to protest Nestlé's new contract with Fryeburg.
- This new contract, which would last for 45 years, was recently up for review, but is now suspended due to the withdrawal of many commissioners.

The Problem:

A large amount of water is being withdrawn from Fryeburg, Maine by Nestlé Waters, removing it from the local water table. Disruptions in everyday life: from noise pollution to the drying of swamps, has led to the forming of groups that protest Nestlé's presence. If the rift between the corporation and the small town becomes more prevalent, a compromise will be harder to reach.

Goals:

- Create a compromise between Nestlé and Fryeburg that correlates with local changes, keeping the environment sustained and the community pleased.
- Find a way for the stalled case to continue.
- Examine the issues from the perspective of the public as well as other stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- Introduce a plan to record and accurately measure the long term health of the aquifer, funded by Nestlé on the grounds that they must prove that their actions are sustainable. This will start to make up for the lack of water data for Fryeburg.
- Change or create state or local legislation allowing for alternates for the PUC in the situation that the primaries recuse themselves.
- Make the contract financially and practically flexible according to changes in the social and environmental climate. More specifically: a 20 year contract with 5 year terms of renewal based on public opinion.

Methods:

- Direct contact with local businesses, town officials, and corporate representatives gave us insight into the public's opinion of the issue.
- When the now stalled debates were still going, we examined the problem as expressed in public forms such as local newspapers and online articles.
- The lack of any public, usable environmental data for the town of Fryeburg allowed us to include that as part of the problem as well as the proposed solution.



Outcomes:

- The new revision to the contract would ensure fair and equal treatment of the town's water needs.
- There would be careful monitoring and recording of the water table to maintain a standard refresh rate and to start a water database for Fryeburg.
- The town would have much more of a say in the new revision process.
- Nestlé would be able to keep pumping and profiting, but without endangering the town.



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References:

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