



Water for Citizens of Weed, California (WCWC)
872 Stringtown, Ave., Weed, CA 96094
www.waterforweedca.org

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Crystal Geyser Roxane's Toxic Track Record Endangers Weed's Drinking Water

In less than a year, Crystal Geyser Roxane (CGR) has suffered from two major scandals, one involving the illegal handling of toxic arsenic-laced wastewater, the other revealing serious ethical lapses. Now this same company wants people in Weed to accept construction of a wastewater leach field right next to one of our community's most important drinking water sources.

In Weed, CGR has been operating a water bottling plant since 1997. This operation has become increasingly controversial due to the efforts of Roseburg Forest Products to force the City off of its most important source of drinking water, Beaughan Springs, so that this water can then be sold to CGR. While the ownership of the water by Roseburg is legally questionable, the City of Weed decided it didn't have the resources to fight Roseburg in court and establish its rightful ownership. This dire situation has led the City to move towards securing this water through an eminent domain process, at considerable future cost to Weed citizens.

CGR is now quietly planning an initiative that could endanger another of the City's most important drinking water sources—the Mazzie Well in South Weed. This well, which taps the same pure underground water that CGR extracts from its Kellogg well a short distance away, serves Weed's Bel Air neighborhood, the College of the Siskiyous and other local businesses.

In 2018, an adjoining neighbor discovered that CGR had, without permission or authorization, been dumping its wastewater into a holding tank that consistently overflowed, sending waste water off its property and into Black Butte Creek, a Boles Creek tributary.¹ CGR was forced to immediately cease this practice and start sending its wastewater into the City of Weed's sewer system for treatment. However, CGR apparently decided that paying its fair share of the sewer bill, in the same manner other households and businesses do, was too expensive. Instead, they have decided to dump the water in a leach field to be developed on their property at the intersection of Alves Road and Mary's Drive. The proposed edge of this leach field is only 250 feet away from the City's Mazzie Well.

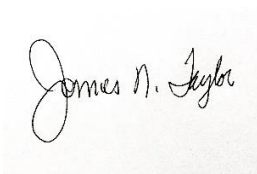
Last November, CGR went to the City for tree-cutting permits and an easement for the proposed leach field—but neglected to first apply to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB) —the state governing body with the authority to permit such a leach field. At the Planning Commission meeting, no discussion of the close proximity of the leach field to the Mazzei well took place. There appears to have been a general belief that CGR could be trusted and that this wastewater would not contain any substances of environmental concern. The Planning Commission approved the permit, but as of this writing CGR, even though it has marked the trees for cutting, still has not approached the NCRWQCB to request a required permit and initiate an environmental review.

Shortly after the Planning Commission meeting, CGR was in the national and international news —as it pled guilty on federal charges to the negligent mishandling of wastewater at its only other California water bottling plant, in Olancho, adjacent to Sequoia National Forest.ⁱⁱ Authorities had discovered CGR’s wastewater had dangerous levels of toxic arsenic that had been filtered out of the water it was bottling. The company was told by state regulators that this arsenic-laced wastewater must be disposed of properly. Instead, CGR paid two contractors to remove the water and dump it, without disclosing its nature, into the sewer system of the small southern California city of Fortuna — a system neither designed nor permitted to handle hazardous waste of this nature. CGR and its contractors were caught red-handed and, for their negligence and deceit, are being fined many millions of dollars.

This revelation came only a few months after another astounding scandal involving CGR in Washington State. There, CGR has been trying to develop a water bottling plant near Mount Rainier, generating widespread community opposition. An internal communication, accidentally emailed to a local newspaper, revealed that CGR was proposing to use a number of dirty and unethical tactics to try to get its way -- including hiring a public relations firm to form a fake citizen group that would support CGR, threatening to sue opponents of its plant, and attempting to manipulate local media with false information and scare tactics. CGR’s lawyers then threatened to sue the newspaper for printing the email, falsely claiming it was privileged attorney-client material.ⁱⁱⁱ

Crystal Geysers, a company owned by a French billionaire and a Japanese pharmaceutical company, and with a track record, just in the last year, of the illegal and negligent handling of its waste water, poor community relations and a variety of unethical practices, will soon be trying to convince the people of Weed that we don’t have anything to worry about in regards to their plan to dump waste water right next to one of our most important sources of drinking water. The company will undoubtedly have lots of “hired guns” -- engineers, hydrologists, etc. -- assuring us all will be fine and that we can trust them to do the right thing. But this company has done nothing to earn our trust and much to make us doubt its sincerity.

Before, or rather instead of, engaging in a debate over details with CGR’s consultants, (people hired to say exactly what the company wants them to say), let’s keep a very fundamental common-sense principle in mind: No farmer would install a septic tank right on top of their family’s drinking water well. It’s just bad public policy to allow a wastewater leach field so close to such an important and essential drinking water source for our community— even more so when the entity proposing to do this has a track record of illegal and unethical behavior.



Jim Taylor
President
Water for Citizens of Weed, California

ⁱ Documentation, including from PRA response to NCRWQCB, Feb. 26, 2020, available on request.

ⁱⁱ Department of Justice press release: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/bottler-crystal-geyser-water-pleads-guilty-illegally-storing-and-transporting-hazardous>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.chronline.com/news/crystal-geyser-mistakenly-emails-chronicle-randle-bottling-project-likely-dead/article_cd562296-a434-11e9-85e8-03a953d811a6.html?fbclid=IwAR3jLI7yJyMq7v8Np3II7_6aQ-1zTGPeTyc1rlFcpaspwrviJ2vVot5oMA4