



**TESTIMONY OF  
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FACTORY MANAGER  
ZEPHYRHILLS NATURAL SPRING WATER**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON COMMERCE, MANUFACTURING AND TRADE  
“OUR NATION OF BUILDERS: MANUFACTURING IN AMERICA”  
FEBRUARY 14, 2013**

**Thank you** – Chairman Terry, Ranking Member Schakowsky.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today. I would like to thank you for calling this hearing and allowing us to testify.

I would like to thank Congressman Bilirakis for his leadership in our district, and to congratulate him on joining this prestigious committee.

I want to also point out that there is another Nestlé Waters manufacturing facility connected with spring sources located in Congresswoman Blackburn’s district in Sweetwater Falls, Tennessee, and we would like to thank the Congresswoman for her support and friendship as well.

[Overview of Zephyrhills and Nestlé Waters North America](#)

Zephyrhills brand natural spring water was established in 1964, and is one of the five high-quality regional spring water brands of the Nestlé Waters North America family, and the primary product manufactured and shipped from our plant in Zephyrhills, Florida.

With 36 years of experience promoting healthy hydration, Nestlé Waters North America traces its roots in the U.S. market to 1976. Since then, the company has grown to \$4.2 billion in U.S. and Canada sales, and from 10 employees to 7,500 U.S. employees, a payroll of \$514 million, including benefits and profit sharing, and a total of 29 bottling facilities, 62 branch locations, and eight administrative offices across the U.S. and Canada. Our plants are clean, smokestack-free operations, and we utilize a rapidly renewable resource in an environmentally sound way.

**Footprint in Florida:** Tens of thousands of years ago, Florida was under water. As sea levels lowered, its mineral-rich limestone bedrock remained, creating a natural filter for groundwater to flow through. Today, the Zephyrhills brand bottled water comes from natural springs located in the Zephyrhills area and other carefully selected spring sources in Florida.

In an era when 70% of what Americans drink comes in a can, bottle, or other container, we take pride in producing healthful bottled beverages in Florida such as Zephyrhills brand natural spring water, and Nestlé Pure Life brand purified water,

along with Deer Park brand spring water, which is bottled at our sister plant in Madison County.

Our factory in Zephyrhills was originally built in 1990 as a 100,000 square foot facility, and has undergone renovations and expansions three times to become the modern 600,000 square foot facility we operate today.

The 258 employees at the Zephyrhills plant produce both the Zephyrhills and Nestlé Pure Life brands in a variety of single-serve and bulk containers, ranging from 8 oz. to our 5-gallon “water cooler” containers, which are distributed to homes and offices across Florida.

Water is piped to the facility or tankered to the plant from our nearby springs, where it undergoes a state-of-the art, multi-step quality process that ends with a hygienically sealed bottle that ensures safety and quality.

Our showcase partnership in Zephyrhills is with the Crystal Springs Preserve. This 525-acre non-profit sanctuary has been restored to its natural Florida habitat and houses an educational facility which is visited by 25,000 students annually through our partnership.

I’m proud to say that last month, we launched a new traveling science center with the Crystal Springs Preserve. It is called WaterVentures, and is a 53 foot semi-trailer

that has been customized to provide a museum-quality platform for educational outreach programs to schools and communities throughout Florida. The exhibits will focus on water education encourage positive stewardship of Florida's diverse watersheds through a variety of inquiry based activities.

**Managing for sustainability** – If all the water in North America fit into a glass, the water used to make bottled water would be less than a drop. Selecting spring sources is a careful, thorough process.

All told, my company manages nearly 14,000 acres of natural watershed area around our 50 spring sites. At the sites, we carefully monitor water levels to ensure that they're being replenished—striving to manage our spring sources not just for today, but for generations to come

**Reducing our Environmental Footprint:** A recent lifecycle analysis concluded that bottled water has the lightest environmental footprint of all packaged beverages, and we are intensely focused on lightening that footprint even further. We also want our bottles back so we can achieve “cradle-to-cradle” recycling and reuse, and have made a bold commitment to lead the bottled water industry to a 60% recycling rate for plastic bottles nationwide.

**Jobs and the Economy:** At Zephyrhills, we are not only proud to produce quality bottled water, but quality jobs as well. Here are some of the statistics that might be most relevant for the Subcommittee.

- We currently employ 258 full time employees and an additional 30 seasonal workers at peak times.
- Across Florida, Nestlé Waters employs nearly 1,000 people with an annual payroll of \$42 million.
- We also spend \$80 million per year with Florida-based business partners, community engagement activities, and distribution networks. This trend is replicated nationally when you consider that we employ 7,400 Americans across the country.

#### Current Regulatory Oversight

**How we are regulated:** Mr. Chairman, you may not always hear from industry representatives who are generally pleased with how they are regulated by the federal government, but bottled water is one such industry. Under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration bottled water is one of the most regulated food products in the country. Each day, for example, we test our bottling lines 200 times to ensure our products meet or exceed FDA requirements and our own internal quality standards – some of which are more stringent than the EPA’s standards for tap water. FDA regulations are even tougher since the enactment of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). We feel that we – and the rest of industry - are regulated appropriately and in accordance with all laws and the highest standards for our consumers.

In the past there have been some efforts to transfer regulatory authority of bottled water to the EPA, which regulates public water sources. For many reasons, we, and the industry as a whole, do not agree with this approach. But most simply, from the standpoint of quality, the Safe Drinking Water Act requires that FDA regulations for bottled water must be at least as protective of human health as those imposed by EPA for municipal drinking water. And as a packaged food product, we believe we should be regulated by the federal agency with the most experience and expertise in food and beverage production.

#### Potential Improvements Could Ensure Uniform Quality and Consumer Information

One area where we are not currently regulated at the federal level where we may be able to find some bipartisan, bi-cameral compromise is with the issue of labeling and consumer right-to-know. We firmly believe that Americans have a right to know where their water comes from and what's in it.

I am proud to say that Nestlé Waters leads the bottled water industry in testing and reporting on the quality of our products. We print our sources and water type on our labels and we provide a telephone number and the address to our company's website, where—since 2005—we have made quality reports publicly available for all of our bottled water brands.

We believe consumers should have that information, regardless of where they purchase a bottle of water in the United States, and believe that Congress and the FDA could help ensure this through a “one best way” federal solution. The current patchwork of state regulations not only allows for uncertainty, but could end up in conflicting sets of rules that impede our ability to get our products to market through our efficient, high-speed manufacturing and distribution network.

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort by some in Congress to introduce one federal standard for bottle water labeling and transparency and we and our industry association look forward to working with members of this committee on ideas for such a legislative approach.

In closing, I would again like to thank you, Chairman Terry and Ranking Member Schakowsky, as well as Congressman Bilirakis, and the Committee members for your attention today. We applaud your leadership in assessing the current climate for manufacturing in America today and trying to find ways to improve it.

My colleagues and I are available for any questions and are happy to submit any additional materials to the record.