

- [Search Classifieds](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars & Trucks](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Place an ad](#)
- [Public Notices](#)
- [Classified Advertising Rates](#)

[>Sonora / Tuolumne News, Sports, & Weather, Angels Camp, Twain Harte, Jamestown | Union Democrat](#)



[Sonora forecast & local web cams](#)

- [Subscriber Sign In](#)
- [Manage Account](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
  
- [News](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Online Extras](#)
- [Community Links](#)
- [Events](#)
  
- [Commercial Print](#)
- [Retail Advertising Rates](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Register](#)

enter search term...  News  Classifieds  Web

web powered by



[Home](#) » [News](#) » [Business](#) » Fresh water flows from Sugar Pine Spring

◀ 3

# Fresh water flows from Sugar Pine Spring

November 25, 2011 01:24 am

Truck driver Brooks Bohrer parked his rig beside a glimmering stainless steel pipe jutting out of a hillside near

Cherry Lake.

EXHIBIT WR-46

He was there on a clear Monday morning to fill up on one of Tuolumne County's lesser-known natural resources — pure mountain spring water.

He hooked the pipe apparatus to his truck and turned a spigot as thousands of gallons of cool, crisp water rushed into his a nondescript cylindrical truck trailer.

"It's real fresh water up here, not like what you get from the tap," he said before trucking the water off to a plant in Livermore for bottling.

It may come as a surprise to some foothill area residents that the water they buy at the supermarket or that fills their office coolers could have its origins in their own backyard.

The Sugar Pine Spring Water company, which contracts with large bottlers like Arrowhead and Calistoga, draws water from the same vast aquifer that eventually snakes its way into the Tuolumne River watershed.

The company is owned and operated by Idaho resident Scott Fahey, a Columbia College graduate who is originally from Oakdale and owns land in Tuolumne County.

It was on land owned by his family that he established his first working spring, Sugar Pine, in the early 1990s. He has since expanded his operation to include Deadwood Spring and two others named "Marco" and "Polo," which are situated on federally owned land and flow with water administered by the State Water Resources Control Board.

He worked in Hawaii and overseas in the construction business when he noticed the bottled water craze starting to take shape in the 1990s. It took him six years to get the first permits to open up the modest Sugar Pine Spring.

Since then, Fahey has become an expert at extracting a commodity that has become increasingly valuable in recent years.

"I'm harvesting and selling a food product — water," he said.

The water comes out of the ground nearly bacteria free, and the piping system that fills two 35,000-gallon storage tanks requires no pumps because it works on gravity alone.

His biggest customer is Arrowhead spring water, which is owned by Nestle, the world's largest food and nutrition company.

His water is also used in brands such as Sierra Spring water and the Detroit-based bottler Absopure. Many airports carry small sized bottles, while large Northern California company coolers are often stocked with Tuolumne County water.

The water extraction point near Cherry Lake is fed by the quartet of springs, which are linked by more than five miles of underground pipes that snake through lands owned by Fahey, Sierra Pacific Industries, the state of California and the U.S. government.

This mix of public and private stewardship of water has led to miles of red tape and a fair number of headaches over the past nine years, Fahey said.

Fahey, 56, is reluctant to talk about various aspects of his business, saying he feels he has been the target of unfair regulations and roadblocks from environmental groups.

He said his business receives scrutiny because water has been such a hot issue in California, and he has had to jump through environmental hoops that have cost his company \$200,000 over the past decade.

"I'm not worried about competition because the federal and state government have set up so many barriers to entering this business," he said.

The U.S. Forest Service levies a special use fee for running pipelines across public lands as well as fees to run water trucks on forest roads, according to Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor Beth Martinez. About two trucks a day, hauling 6,600 gallons of water each, fill up at the station.

The State Water Board requires at least 10 gallons per minute to flow into the Tuolumne River watershed from the springs. Anything else can be soaked up by the water trucks.

"In a low water year, there has to be a minimum amount of water flowing, so if 10 gallons isn't there, they can't remove any of it," Martinez said.

Anne Denton, of the Mi-Wok Ranger District, said that, like logging, mining and cattle grazing, extracting water is one of many ways that public resources are used in private enterprise. She also said there are no threatened or endangered species in the area.

"From a conservation standpoint, spring water is the most environmentally conservative in terms of usage," Fahey said. "It wastes the least amount."

He was quick to distinguish his product from purified water, which, unlike spring water, generally comes from the municipal water supplies in large cities. Most California spring water is harnessed from sources in the Sierra Nevada, and very little is wasted because it doesn't require extensive filtering to be safe to drink, Fahey said.

“You test it to make sure it meets all the standards for bottled water, which are significantly higher than water from the tap,” he said.

The filling station is also part of the Tuolumne Utilities District emergency response plan, which seeks to find other sources of water in the event that TUD facilities need to be shut down.

Firefighters also use the station to fill water tenders while fighting back country blazes.

Contact Ryan Campbell at [rcampbell@uniondemocrat.com](mailto:rcampbell@uniondemocrat.com) or 588-4526.

## Follow UnionDemocrat.com



•

[Twitter](#)

•

[RSS](#)

## [The Union Democrat print edition](#)

[View all The Union Democrat print publications »](#)



[The Union Democrat 06/10/15](#)

## [View Paper](#)

The Union Democrat is now online in a Replica E-edition form and publishes Tuesday through Saturday. E-Edition or Print Plus subscribers have full access.

[Subscribe](#)

EXHIBIT WR-46

If you are not a current subscriber, subscribe today for immediate access.

### Sonora Events (<http://www.uniondemocrat.com/events>)

**WED 10** **Story Time**  
Tuolumne County Li... | Sonora, CA  
(<http://www.uniondemocrat.com/events#/details/STORY-TIME/1379853/2015-06-10T10>)

**SAT 13** **Open Air Market**  
Mono Village Cente... | Sonora, CA  
(<http://www.uniondemocrat.com/events#/details/OPEN-AIR-MARKET/1379853/2015-06-13T00>)

#### News

[Local](#) / [Sports](#) / [Business](#) / [Stocks](#) / [News of Record](#) / [State](#) / [Nation/World](#) / [Obituaries](#) / [Submit News](#)

#### Opinion

[Editorials](#) / [Letters](#)

#### Photos

[Union Democrat Photos](#) / [Community Photos](#) /

#### Classifieds

[Search Classifieds](#) / [Jobs](#) / [Autos](#) / [Homes](#) / [Rentals](#) / [Place an Ad](#)

#### Online Extras

[Weather](#) / [Local Business Links](#) / [Community Links](#) / [Photo Reprints](#)

#### Union Democrat

[About](#) / [Contact](#) / [Commercial Printing](#) / [Subscriptions](#) / [Terms of Use](#) / [Site Map](#)

---

© Copyright 2001 - 2015 [Western Communications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved. By Using this site you agree to our [Terms of Use](#)