WATER POLICY

PREAMBLE

Water is essential to all forms of life. It belongs to the earth and all species. It is a basic need and fundamental right. Water covers more than two-thirds of the earth, but only a small part of it is suitable for drinking and irrigation. And on top of that it is distributed unevenly among countries, among people. Its use will also be increasing worldwide driven by a combination of population growth, socio-economic considerations and changing consumption patterns. Despite all this, the responsibility lies on the governments to assure a clean and safe supply of drinking water to all people.

VISION

The vision of the Greens is to prevent efforts to privatise, export, and sell water for profit or as a commodity. The vision is to safeguard water supply for all citizens, promote water conservation and water quality, and ensure sufficient environmental allocations for healthy ecosystems - to create a sustainable future for humans and nature.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Greens is to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination, while prioritising those most in need. The objective is to make services available that are physically accessible, equitably affordable, safe, and culturally acceptable as an integral human right.

ACTION PLAN

The global climate crisis is inextricably linked to water; therefore, the Greens are of the belief that we need a holistic approach to managing our water resources. Inappropriate development and poor planning have resulted in increasing rain-impermeable areas, which then compound the severity and frequency of flooding and pollution in regions downstream. Thus, the Greens will support diverse, democratic public water administration and distribution, and adopt the principle of bioregionalism i.e. living within the means of a region's natural resources. Therefore, the Greens will –

Sustainability of Water

- Safeguard water to ensure the well-being of future generations and to restore ecological systems
- Make water a public good, held in trust and shared equitably
- Minimise over-consumption of water by promoting and requiring efficiency measures
- Preserve natural systems of water and restore streams, rivers, lakes, bays, wetlands and groundwater aquifers
- Promote storm water technologies that detain, treat, filtrate, and reuse storm waters near where it is collected
- Take measures to stop soil erosion and do sedimentation control, establish vegetative buffers, and develop performance standards for development to mitigate the negative effects of development on streams, rivers and lakes
- Restore and protect the riparian areas

- Ensure pre-treatment of industrial wastes to eliminate the presence of metals, solvents, and other toxics in sewer water
- Ensure treatment of toxic waste from existing factory farms
- Make water publicly controlled and provided on a not-for-profit basis
- Encourage building codes that encourages rainwater collection and grey water recycling
- Protect wetland habitat from loss and pollution
- Eliminate public subsidies or support for large-scale irrigation and water storage
- Support small-scale on-farm storage, including in wetlands
- Not allow establishment of new water bottling plants
- Encourage vegetarianism and other diets with lower ecological impact, as the meat industry is among the biggest users of water, as well as a contributor to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Review and strengthen water governance frameworks to ensure appropriate, scientific management

Laws

- Create a statutory framework which requires environmental outcomes to be met to protect water sources and their dependent ecosystems
- Make strong laws with effective enforcement mechanisms to assure a safe and adequate supply of water for all people and all life
- Ensure that strong national and international laws promote conservation, reclaim polluted water systems, develop water-supply restrictions, ban toxic and pesticide dumping, control or ban corporate farming, and bring the rule of law to transnational corporations that pollute water systems
- Strengthen the water and land rights
- Create law to restrict mining and depletion of the present underground aquifers

Water Protection and Conservation

- Improve water quality, water conservation, and water security as they are closely interlinked
- Encourage water conservation through appropriate billing structures, building regulations and education
- Promote reduction in individual and industrial water use
- Eliminate water subsidies for corporate agribusiness or other corporate sectors
- Encourage use of water efficient appliances and fixtures in all new construction, and promote retrofitting of existing buildings
- Promote climate appropriate landscaping for the given region
- Retain rainwater through rainwater collection
- Promote drip and rainwater irrigation systems
- Promote reuse of the gray and black waters we produce
- Promote native landscaping and other drought resistant and climate-appropriate plants, in order to reduce the need for irrigation
- Promote natural systems, such as wetlands and rivers, for water and wastewater treatment where appropriate

- Assist community organisations to monitor the use of local resources, and to oversee the enforcement of water quality regulations
- Ensure water efficient appliances and fixtures be used in all new construction as well as to promote retrofitting of older buildings
- Install home, agricultural, and industrial rainwater catchment and storage systems to retain rainwater and to reduce runoff
- Develop comprehensive wastewater treatment practices so as the water can be reused
- Minimise the use of water-consuming crop plant species and use traditional agricultural practices to do so
- Ensure that reclaimed water is used for watering, gardens, landscaping, and similar purposes
- Ensure use of recycled water to flush toilets
- Assist community organisations to monitor the use of local resources, as well as to oversee the enforcement of water quality regulations
- Preserve, protect, and restore natural water features that are vital to achieve responsible use of water resources, and to simultaneously protect our flora and fauna
- Protect natural river systems and catchment areas from pollution, large scale hydro projects and development allowing access to water resources for the local population.
- Support eliminating pollution of groundwater from leaking underground and aboveground storage tanks, from fracking wastes, contamination from overuse of fertilisers and regulating water pollution from septic tanks
- Control the quality of water above and upstream of aquifers, and manage the pumping of groundwater to avoid their depletion and land settling
- Support research into new ways to produce potable water
- Eliminate the use of chemical pesticides on public and private lands to protect surface and ground waters, aquatic life, and humans
- Increase government subsidies to achieve water conservation
- Ensure all bulk surface and groundwater supplies for commercial, industrial, agricultural and private discretionary use are priced to encourage sustainable levels of consumption as well as to reflect the true environmental and social costs of extraction
- Introduce mandatory targets for water corporations, enforceable by financial penalties, that result in a reduction of extraction of water from bulk surface water and groundwater to sustainable levels
- Monitor water quality to ensure that drinking water meets WHO or national drinking water standards
- Ensure that sustainable water use is a compulsory element of planning
- Increase community awareness of the large quantities of water used in water intensive industries
- Public ownership and control of major water infrastructure systems
- Ban native forest logging and within water catchments
- Restore, maintain and protect rivers and freshwater environments as part of our natural heritage and future prosperity
- Support and promote organic agriculture so that underground water is not polluted

- Make conservation -- reduce, reuse, recycle -- an essential part of life as water conservation also reduces energy consumption and pollution and it also leads to mitigation of the climate change

Water Management

- End private water banking, because profit making subverts consistent planning for the public interest
- Support upgrade of existing water infrastructure to allow for clean, reliable access to water while preserving the natural habitat
- Implement strong laws to promote conservation, reclaim polluted water systems, develop water-supply restrictions, ban toxics and pesticide dumping, control corporate farming, and bring the rule of law to trans-state and transnational operations that pollute water systems
- Integrate land use with water use for urban planning decisions
- Educate public on the need for sound water management practices
- Ensure that government does not profit from the supply of water
- Improve water resources management and access to water supply and sanitation services
- Scrutinise water management through a climate resilience lens
- Promote participatory water management approaches

Privatisation

- Eliminate privatisation of water and foreign ownership of water resources
- Ensure diverse, democratic public water administration and distribution
- Assist community organisations to monitor the use of local resources, and to oversee the enforcement of water quality regulations
- Eliminate state owned, foreign government, or private large scale hydro projects including the mass relocation of local peoples for construction

Water Allocation Framework

- Create a water allocation framework that explicitly recognises tribal/indigenous cultural values and native title rights, provides legal recognition of and protection for cultural flows, and provides statutory roles in water governance for the traditional owners
- Ensure environmental impact assessments, prior to commencement, for schemes involving re-insertion of waste-water into an aquifer
- Address threats to freshwater systems such as land clearance, mining, drilling and exploration, erosion, large scale hydro schemes, sedimentation and pollution
- Prioritise environmental needs in the re-allocation of water entitlements
- Support irrigation communities to adapt to reduced water availability, by integrating structural adjustment
- Eliminate measures such as the damming of waterways for control of access to water
- Handle and treat wastewater from industrial, domestic and agricultural utilities

Marine Ecosystems

- Ensure that publicly funded research focuses on the sustainability of whole ecosystems, including but not restricted to sustainable fisheries
- Address sewerage disposal, run-off in rivers, and sedimentation from on-land development
- Reduce the risk of oil and chemical spills as much as possible
- Not allow new deep sea drilling, mining or exploration in waters
- Make those companies or governments liable that exploit marine resources under International Law of the Sea and ther UN Conventions.
- Create substantially more marine reserves and protection areas in areas of ecological importance, feeding and/or breeding grounds
- Create a network of marine mammal sanctuaries at national and international levels

International

- Create new forms of international, bioregional, and community organisations, watershed/ ecosystem-based to monitor and equitably distribute the fresh water necessary for all life on the planet
- Work towards a legally binding ban on all whaling and broaden the International Whaling Commission's mandate to include dolphins and dugongs
- Implement the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands aimed at halting the loss of wetlands and conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain
- Respect the rights and sovereignty of riparian countries and honour international water agreements
- Respect local ownership and regional or national government ownership of water while not controlling water resources by private or foreign governments

Miscellaneous

- Develop pricing mechanisms that encourage conservation and re-use to establish consistency and fairness to all users
- Implement pro-poor water tariff and pricing systems
- Reorient the priorities in order to achieve a truly sustainable water regime in view of the cycles of intense drought and flooding
- Develop cheap and accessible technology to desalinate the sea water with environmental measures
- Ensure a minimum of about 100 litres of water per day, per person, for drinking, cooking, and washing
- Discourage demand for energy-intensive water pumping, transportation, and treatment
- Discourage those climate change mitigation measures that can further exacerbate water scarcity
- Protect existing surface and groundwater from pollution by agricultural and industrial wastes as well as runoff from homes and roadways
- Invest in improved hydrological data, institutions and governance, education and capacity development, risk assessment and knowledge sharing
- Ensure representation, participation, behavioural change, and accountability of all stakeholders in water access, treatment, and management

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