



Recycling is not the best solution to stopping the damage plastic is causing to our planet, say FloWater CEO Rich Razgaitis (Photo credit: reid iStock)

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WASTE NOT Recycling Isn't Enough: Our Goal Should Be 'Uncycling'

The CEO of Blue Denver-based portfolio company FloWater, Rich Razgaitis, recently called for communities around the world to move from recycling to 'uncycling'.

The timely call, coming on the eve of the COP27 summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheik in early November, appeared in a by-lined article

written for the [Sustainable Brands](#) platform. The FloWater chief executive notes that at a practical level, we simply cannot recycle our way out of the damage that plastic waste is doing to our world, our environment and ourselves. That's why it's time to consider uncycling – or reducing our use of single-use plastics down to zero.

Rich Razgaitis continued: You finish lunch and stand in front of a rainbow-hued collection of trash bins, each with a specific and clearly labeled purpose. You drop your compostables into the green one, your plastic into the blue one and whatever's left into the brown one. You then hop into the hybrid or electric vehicle of your choice and drive off with a small sense of satisfaction that you've just made the world a more sustainable place.

But, have you?

The harsh truth is that, whether you put your empty water bottle into the correct-colored can or just chuck it straight down a storm drain, it's likely going to end up in the same place: floating in the ocean with [billions of other bits of plastic waste](#). Recycling as a concept is a noble and worthy endeavor; but unfortunately, the [reality has fallen far short](#) of what's needed to significantly reduce the amount of waste entering our ecosystem, especially in the case of single-use plastics.

A [study](#) released by the **Environmental Protection Agency** found that in 2018, just under 9 percent of the 35.7 million tons of consumer plastic created in the **US** were recycled into new products. And while that is a depressingly low number, [a second study](#) by **Bennington College** found that it had actually fallen to 5 percent by 2021. Another [study](#), by **McKinsey**, found that approximately five to ten million metric tons of plastic waste were dumped into the ocean in 2018 – that number grew as the pandemic caused a [surge in demand for single-use plastic products](#) including face masks, gloves, hospital gowns and other related medical equipment. These numbers make clear that recycling alone will not make a significant dent in the mountains of waste that are flooding into our oceans, waterways and landfills.

It is not hyperbole to say that the plastic waste filling our oceans represents a natural disaster – plastic makes up 80 percent of [marine debris](#). This is not only deadly to sea life – it also breaks down and eventually finds its way back into our own bodies in the form of [microplastics](#).

As if that weren't enough, the manufacturing of plastic bottles is also a major contributor to climate change – with the production of just four single-use bottles releasing enough emissions to be the equivalent of driving one mile in your car.

One of the main reasons that recycling falls short is that new or “virgin” plastic remains cheaper to buy than recycled plastic. Additionally, the trade in recycled plastic was severely disrupted in 2018 when **China** – which once imported half of the world's recyclable plastic waste – [banned its importation](#); and several other Southeast Asian countries followed suit.

On a practical level, we simply cannot recycle our way out of the damage that plastic waste is doing to our world, our environment and ourselves. That's why it's time to consider the concept of *uncycling* – or reducing our use of single-use plastic products down to zero.

On the individual level, this can feel daunting, considering the scope of the problem; but there are several ways that we can, within our own lives, actively contribute to reducing plastic waste.

One of the simplest and most effective solutions is to use a [refillable water bottle](#) instead of a single-use plastic one. The average US consumer [drank just over 45 gallons of bottled water](#) in 2020, and the standard plastic water bottle size is 16.9 ounces. That means a single person switching to a reusable water bottle could save roughly 340 plastic water bottles a year. Expand that number out to a family or even a community or business, and you can see how just one small shift can reduce the amount of plastic clogging up our ecosystem by thousands of bottles.

While there is no one miracle solution to protecting our environment, phasing out our need for single-use plastics – from straws to [shopping bags](#) to coffee lids – is one of the most powerful steps that we can take as individuals to end this plastic disaster and build a more sustainable world. By simply switching from a disposable water bottle to a reusable one, we can make a real and measurable impact on how much of this non-biodegradable waste pollutes our most precious resources.

About FloWater Denver, Colorado-based FloWater merged in early 2022 with Sweden's [Bluewater](#), a world leader in innovative water technologies that is also a member of the Blue portfolio. Both company's share a mission of

innovating solutions for eliminating single-use plastic water bottles and providing access to safe, purified and great-tasting drinking water for everyone. With their beverages, advanced water purification tech, water refill stations and sustainable bottle solutions, Bluewater and FloWater provide water free of heavy metals, 'forever chemicals' (PFAS), bacteria or viruses, microplastics and other contaminants to consumers, business, schools and large-scale sports events globally. Both Bluewater and FloWater have each been honored with Fast Company "World Changing Ideas" awards, and featured by numerous leading media, including CNN, Forbes, Inc., The Hollywood Reporter, The Financial Times, and The Daily Telegraph. For more information: www.drinkflowater.com.

About Blue

Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, Blue is an investment company that serves as a catalyst for innovations that can solve some of the major challenges facing our planet and all living on it. Blue's mission is to find, engage with, invest in and support entrepreneurs, innovators and businesses driven by the desire to deliver tangible, sustainable solutions that can benefit human wellbeing and planetary health. www.blueab.se

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