

Andy Tonnesen

Rio's Olympic Waters Blighted by Heavy Pollution

BBC News

In this article by Julie Carneiro, the horrific conditions that plague Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay are depicted. This bay is fed by fifty five rivers and pollution comes from every drop of water entering the bay. The pollution comes in all forms from human fecal waste to rubbish and runoff.

The pollution is having huge negative effects on the country as a whole, and their image to the rest of the world. People are urged not to swim in the water and avoid ingesting even the slightest amount. The water quality was tested weekly at various beaches along the 146 acre bay, and almost everyone failed and deemed unsuitable to swim. With the Olympics looming in their near future the political promises to clean up the water, seemed vague and distant.

The government promised to clean up the bay and create water treatment facilities before the games were held. Thirty months prior only one of the 7 facilities promised were created and 34% of the water entering the bay was treated, the remaining 66% remained raw sewage and polluted water. The new promises for a cleaner bay seemed to follow the same track as the failed attempt of 1992 in which 1.2 billion dollars was squandered and little improvements came about from the efforts and money. Biologist Mario Moscatelli, claimed that now Brazil has the money, and the technologies but lacked serious politicians who will follow through on the promises.

This amount of pollution is unthinkable from a modern American mindset. It is unimaginable to think that raw sewage is being pumped into the water at such high concentrations. It was said that fifteen cities surrounding Guanabara Bay, populated by eight million people who produce 18,000 liters of bodily waste a second! These numbers are so hard to wrap my head around because of the sheer amount of pollution at such a fast rate. Americans are very blessed to be able to simply flush their waste down the toilet and not worry about polluting their water. We know that it will be treated and sanitized through treatment plants, and our drinking water and swimming beaches will remain clean and usable.

Water is an immensely important resource and is needed for all aspects of life. It is a right in America to have clean water, while in Brazil the politicians have the pollution and water quality low on their list of priorities. Something needs to be done, for the water as well as the politicians. People in Brazil are too poor to treat their water, and clean water is scarce leading to a ticking time bomb before disease plagues the country and death becomes widespread.

“Decades of Neglect” could not describe the situation any more accurately. The government neglected to provide clean water for their citizens for years, and are now scrambling to save their image on the world stage. Short term processes are being implemented to temporarily clean the water with the help of “eco-boats and eco-barriers.” This all comes at a cost multiplied by years of turned heads and neglect. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure rings true. If they put in the effort earlier

to protect that they have, who knows if they would be dealing with the polluted death trap they call “beautiful” Guanabara Bay.