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Dear Editor

In your story last week regarding cruise ship discharges, you noted ACA's John Binkley stated Ketchikan drinking water delivered to the ships has a copper level of >800ppb. He compared this with the State Water Quality Standard of 3.1ppb, and claimed closing the gap would be impossible. According to the Ketchikan Public Utility, the average household copper level in Ketchikan is 41ppb, not 800ppb, and cruise ships actually receive far lower concentrations of copper since the 41ppb figure includes contamination from copper piping in the homes where the samples are taken. Ketchikan municipal water goes to the dock via concrete pipes, i.e., the industry may need to reduce the level from 10 or 20ppb (perhaps even less) to 3.1ppb, not from 800ppb as claimed.

The industry admits it has no intention to try and comply with our pollution laws even though they've made no effort to improve their performance – they simply want them scrapped. What is most disturbing is that once again they are purposefully distorting the issue: they were informed about the copper level discrepancy months ago and haven't changed their presentation.

The cruise lines told us they couldn't meet our sewage standards seven years ago, but they did. They told us the head tax would kill our tourism economy and it didn't. Hopefully our lawmakers haven't been flimflammed this time into abandoning our pollution rules by the industry's recent statewide dog and pony show. The buffet may have tasted good, but it certainly wasn't a free lunch.

Gershon Cohen
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