

Grey water pilot project poised to begin

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Multi-disciplinary initiative garners prize at Cleantech 2010 Exhibition.

A joint NGO, governmental, private sector and academic initiative to test grey water recycling systems is awaiting its last permits before implementation, Shomera for a Better Environment Executive Director Miriam Garmaise told *The Jerusalem Post* Wednesday. The initiative, which was first reported on in *The Jerusalem Post* last May, was awarded the Project of Excellence award by the Cleantech 2010 exhibition which was held in Tel Aviv on Tuesday and Wednesday.

After over two years of planning and preparation, the Greywater Recycling Initiative is applying for its final permits to install two systems to recycle the shower water at a mikva [ritual bath]. Garmaise declined to specify which municipality would be hosting the project before all the permits have been approved, but did say the municipality has been quite supportive.

The initiative would recycle water from the showers at the mikva, not the mikva water itself, Garmaise stressed. Grey water is the collective term used for water which has been used once but does not contain human excretions; such as water from the washing machine, shower or sink. The pilot project would only recycle water from showers though.

While the Health Ministry has generally refused to authorize grey water recycling systems in urban areas, this pilot project could serve as a catalyst to change that reality, according to Garmaise. The ministry has been working in conjunction with Shomera and its partners on this project from the very beginning.

The Cleantech 2010 prize was awarded for the rarity of that very convergence of sectors – bringing together major players from the public and private sectors and academia. Shomera has brought together all of the different elements partnering with Technion – Israel Institute of Technology Dr. Eran Friedler, one of the country's foremost experts on grey water recycling, the Water Authority's Division of Water Conservation, and the Water-Arc company which is the operational arm of the project.

“Even though the project has not actually been deployed in the field yet, I think the prize reflects the judges' interest in showcasing an initiative which pulled so many different sectors together,” Garmaise told the *Post*.

Assuming the pilot project yields favorable results, the next phase would be an open demonstration and a broad-based educational campaign, she said. Grey water recycling would be an effective conservation measure for the long term, Garmaise pointed out, rather than an immediate solution to the country's current water scarcity.

While a respectable amount of the money for the pilot has been raised through The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund of San Francisco, The Ford Conservation and Environmental Grants Program for 2009 and an additional foundation which preferred to remain anonymous, Garmaise said they were still in need of additional financial partners.

Shomera was a recipient of a Green Globe Award in 2008 and has been active in implementing “programs with an entrepreneurial spirit and setting trends,” according to Garmaise, for the past 12 years.

Meanwhile, a grey water recycling bill sponsored by MK Nitzan Horowitz (Meretz) and several other MKs is expected to come before the Ministerial Committee on Legislation for a vote on Sunday and then proceed to the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee for a preliminary reading and discussion. The bill was also sponsored by a cross party group of MKs: Finance Committee chairman Moshe Gafni (United Torah Judaism), Economic Affairs Committee chairman Ofir Akunis (Likud), Internal Affairs and Environment Committee chairman David Azulai (Shas) and Health and Environment Committee chairman Dov Henin (Hadash).

In addition to Shomera, several other companies and organizations were honored by the Cleantech 2010 exhibition. Arrow Ecology won for breakthrough company for its anaerobic garbage recycling technology and Termokir won for its environmental policies as an industrial factory. A.R.I. was awarded the prize for best product for its water measuring system, which accurately measures the water in the pipe to help determine how much is being lost to leaks and prevents air in the pipes from being considered water and a customer being overcharged.

The Samuel Neaman Institute for Advanced Studies in Science and Technology and the Environmental Education Center at Hiriya both garnered awards this year for their educational endeavors.

The exhibition also awarded prizes to the most environmentally friendly regional councils or municipalities. Regional Councils Bnei Shimon and Misgav, Local Council Omer and the cities of Kfar Saba and Ra'anana took home the awards this year.



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