



ter. Then, in the late '80s, it started to operate its first reverse osmosis plant. "Sea water reverse osmosis (SWRO) technology had been around since the 1960s, but it had a limited track record on a large scale compared to the then more commonly used thermal desalination processes," says van Zanten. "There were seawater reverse osmosis plants throughout the Caribbean for developments, but we were one of the first to use it for island-wide supply. Initially it was a very small plant – 60,000 gallons a day to bridge us to the time that a larger plant was operational. And we have been using seawater, reverse osmosis throughout, not only on this island but also on our sister island of Cayman Brac." In its early days, van Zanten says that one of the biggest drawbacks of SWRO was its high energy

costs. "But as a result of some good developments in regards to membrane technology and energy recovery, the costs have come down, considerably," he reports. "It's still expensive, but it's a lot better than it was 25 or 30 years ago."

The island's water distribution system continued to be extended, and by 2008, piped water was available to nearly all residents of Grand Cayman, either via the Water Authority's water distribution system, or via the (much smaller) water distribution system owned by Cayman Water Company, a private company operating under a license from the Government. "Close to a hundred percent of the island is hooked up to the system," van Zanten says.