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# SOLAR POWERED PORTABLE SEA WATER DESALINATION A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Sourish HS, Praveen S, Mathan Kumar M, Vijay Kumar P, Jones S, Pradeep, Dhanush kumar, Balasubramanian M
Department of Mechanical Engineering R.M.K. College of Engineering and Technology, Tamil Nadu, Chennai.
Corresponding Author: manianmb@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

The article brings out the methods of desalination to remove harmful ingredients from seawater catering to human consumption. This work demonstrates a field-deployable solar powered portable desalination system with two stages. By this procedure, even from the source water with turbidity more than 30 NTU, crystal clear water (<1 NTU) can be produced by reducing suspended particles by at least a factor of 10.Also, the water's resulting color (5), order (Agreeable), and taste (Agreeable) are within the acceptable limit, which is required for ideal drinking water. It is possible to construct a portable unit with a fully integrated prototype (controller, pumps, and battery) that is managed by an IR unit and turbidity meter. The out-flow time of 175 sec/2.91 minutes per liter of water discharge can be obtained by this process, which is equal to 20.61 liters per Hour.

**Key words:** Portable Desalination**,** Solar Desalination technologies, Pre-Treatment Technics of Saline Water

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Desalination has been practiced by man in the form of distillation for over 2000 years. Although there are a number of ways to convert seawater to fresh water, a common overall process applies to all schemes.

The actual nature of each step would depend on the desalination method used. With the growing demand for good water and all other water resources draining, the desalination division has been improving at an increased rate. The present article discusses about the portable water dispenser has no additional energy sources and runs entirely on solar powe r. Solar power is made highly effective by the use of Fresnel lenses fitted, which concentrate the solar radiation on the water and make the water boil and thus evaporate at a faster rate. The vapor is subsequently gathered through a connected outlet pipe and condensed into storage.

Depending on solar exposure, the rate of evaporation and condensation will fluctuate. This model is especially efficient on sunny days. However, taking into account that the planet is presently facing a shortage of energy resources, this model effectively provides us with clean drinking water.

**Solar Desalination Technologies**

Desalination plants can be operated by solar energy directly or indirectly to decrease the desalination impacts allied with energy costs. Solar desalination significantly reduces energy costs and carbon footprints. It provides a sustainable solution to meet water needs. Solar collector or direct desalination and solar thermal collector are the two types of technology available.

**Solar Still**

Solar power can directly prepare to distill water using a solar collector, which is a straightforward solar desalination process. "Solar still" is the inducing example of the solar collector (Figure 1). Solar stills supply potable water, and its functionality and upkeep are easy to maintain and user friendly. Integrated photovoltaic thermal solar still has excellent applications for the off-grid areas, villages, and communities facing an electricity crisis and water scarcity. However, solar stills usually produce a meager amount of freshwater distillate.

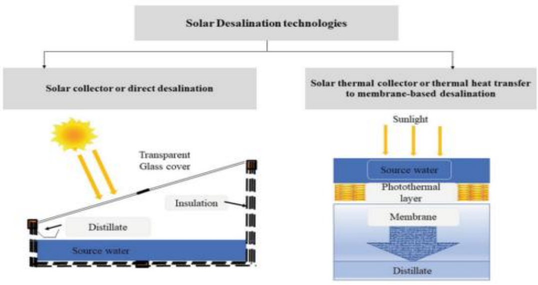


Figure 1. Two types of solar desalination technologies

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**Solar Thermal Collectors**

Solar collectors convert solar power to thermal power. There are various kinds of parabolic collectors utilized in desalination systems, which serve as a solar cooling apparatus concentrated on solar absorption and heat adsorption, the advancement of solar electricity, solar desalination, and solar disinfection. “Solar thermal collector” or photovoltaic panel captures solar energy for heat transport to operate various types of membrane desalination technologies.

**Membrane-Based Hybrid Solar Photovoltaics**

Revolutionary advancements in nano-membrane creation and flawless manufacturing processes are essential for effective solar desalination technologies.In the conceivable future, membrane-based separation and desalination techniques may stay critical instruments in water treatment.

**Portable and Micro-desalination Based on Electrodialysis**

Hybrid solar photovoltaics-electrolysis and micro-desalination have been developed to enhance water and energy security. A mobile desalination device utilizing direct contact membrane distillation driven by solar photovoltaics can be an effective choice for micro desalination facilities and off-grid residences.

Based on membrane distillation powered by solar photovoltaics, the portable desalination devices are less energy-intense and low carbon-emitting and the considerable concern is rising to integrate it with RE. However, the identification of the most effective type of RE form is still to be established in order to optimize desalinated water production while using the least amount of energy.

The main reason for this is the existence of diverse methods of desalination and renewable energies.

**Forward Osmosis, Pressure-Retarded Osmosis, and Other Hybridized System**

Forward osmosis and pressure-retarded osmosis generates energy which depends on the use of a semipermeable membrane. The membrane is permeable to water while impermeable to salt.

It is a possible membrane-centered method for desalinating high-salinity seawater and reusing water in situations where RO is ineffective or not cost-efficient.

In forward-osmosis, water flows over semipermeable membranes that change the osmotic pressure gradient between the membrane sides.

**Design and Description of the Setup**

The desalination by reverse osmosis(RO) process is energy-intensive. This is due to low recovery ratio (between 25% and 40%) and high operating pressure (between 60 and 80 bar). The various stages of designing are shown in the schematic layout (Fig.2).

Pre-treatment is very important in RO because the membrane surfaces must remain clean. In order to prevent salt precipitation or microbiological growth on the membranes, it is necessary to first remove any suspended solids and pre-treat the water.

The choice of a particular pre-treatment process is based on a number of factors such as feed water quality characteristics, space availability, RO membrane requirements, etc.

The pressure required for the water to flow acr oss the membrane and have the salt rejected is provided by high pressure pumps.

A portion of the feed water is discharged without passing through the membrane. Without this discharge, the pressurized feed water would continue to increase in salinity content, causing supersaturation of salts. Improvements in membranes and energy recovery devices used for seawater RO (SWRO) have improved the overall process efficiency thereby lowering the costs associated with treatment (Fig.2).

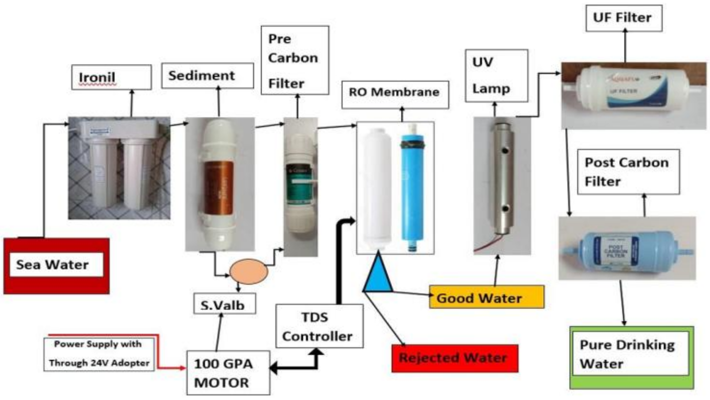


Figure 2. Schematic Layout of the desalination unit [1]

## 2. LITERATURE SURVEY

The study of literature survey on portable seawater desalination machines powered by solar panels for hikers represents a multifaceted convergence of renewable energy technologies, advanced membrane processes, and rugged design principles that are essential for remote, off-grid water purification. Early works in the field focused on the development of solar stills, which, while simple in design and operation, typically provided low throughput and were highly dependent on environmental conditions; these studies laid the groundwork for understanding the interplay between solar thermal energy and evaporation–condensation cycles in desalination. Over the past two decades, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to membrane-based technologies, particularly reverse osmosis (RO) and membrane distillation (MD), as a means of achieving higher water recovery rates and improved efficiency in portable systems [2]. In the literature, a consensus has emerged that for a machine to be effective in field conditions, it must integrate a robust solar energy harvesting system, an energy storage unit, and a compact, high-pressure pump capable of driving water through a desalination membrane under variable load conditions. Many studies have examined the performance characteristics of miniature high-pressure pumps, such as the Aquatec 6800 and 8800 Series, noting that their 12V or 24V DC operation aligns well with the voltage outputs of solar panels and battery systems, thereby enabling the development of lightweight, portable units that can be carried by hikers without significant burden. Researchers have also explored the use of advanced materials in membrane fabrication, including polymeric and composite membranes that exhibit high salt rejection rates while maintaining structural integrity under fluctuating pressures and temperatures encountered in outdoor environments [3]. The literature highlights that, compared to conventional large-scale desalination plants, portable systems face unique challenges, including the need for rapid start-up, low maintenance, and resilience to fouling by organic matter and biofilms present in natural seawater. In addition to technical performance, several papers have delved into the human factors and ergonomics associated with portable desalination devices, arguing that design simplicity and ease of use are critical for adoption among hikers, who may lack the technical expertise to troubleshoot complex systems in remote locations. A number of experimental studies have reported on the integration of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels with desalination units, demonstrating that even under suboptimal lighting conditions, these systems can generate sufficient power to drive RO processes, albeit with careful attention to the matching of energy supply and demand. The variability of solar insolation, a factor that is well-documented in the literature, has prompted the development of hybrid systems that combine solar power with battery storage, ensuring continuous operation during periods of low sunlight [4]. Researchers have also evaluated the thermodynamic efficiency of these systems, using models to simulate the energy balance between the solar input, the mechanical energy required for pumping, and the thermal losses inherent in membrane distillation processes. One recurring theme in the literature is the trade-off between system weight and performance; while increasing the size of the solar panel array and energy storage can improve desalination output, it also adds to the overall mass, potentially limiting the device's portability. This has led to a focus on lightweight, high-efficiency components, such as flexible PV panels and miniaturized DC pumps, which have been shown to offer a good compromise between power output and physical weight. Moreover, the environmental impact of deploying such systems in natural habitats has been scrutinized, with authors emphasizing the importance of sustainable, low-waste designs that minimize ecological disruption [5]. In one comprehensive review, scholars compared various desalination technologies and concluded that RO systems, when paired with efficient solar energy collectors, offer the most promising avenue for portable, off-grid desalination, primarily due to their high salt rejection capabilities and relatively low energy consumption per liter of water produced. The review also noted that while MD systems are attractive due to their lower operating temperatures and potential compatibility with waste heat, their lower water recovery rates and susceptibility to membrane wetting present significant engineering challenges that have yet to be fully resolved in portable applications [6]. Further studies have examined the potential for integrating emerging nanotechnologies into desalination membranes, with the aim of enhancing permeability and reducing fouling; these innovations are still largely in the experimental stage but represent an exciting frontier for future portable desalination systems. Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) models have been applied to simulate the flow conditions within compact desalination modules, enabling researchers to optimize the design of flow channels and pressure distributions to minimize energy losses and enhance membrane performance. This body of work is complemented by case studies documenting field trials of prototype devices, where hiker feedback has provided valuable insights into user interface design, system durability, and real-world water quality outcomes. Such trials have underscored the necessity for robust, self-cleaning mechanisms within the desalination unit to mitigate the effects of salt scaling and biofouling, which are particularly problematic in salt-rich marine environments [7]. Some studies have proposed the use of periodic backwashing and the incorporation of antimicrobial coatings as potential solutions to these issues, though the long-term efficacy of these measures remains an area for further research. The literature also points to the importance of modularity in design, suggesting that future portable desalination machines could benefit from interchangeable components that allow users to adapt the system to varying water qualities and operational demands, whether that involves switching between RO and MD modes or integrating additional filtration stages to remove particulates and organic contaminants [8].From a practical standpoint, several researchers have provided guidelines for the optimal sizing of solar panels and battery capacities based on expected daily water usage, ambient temperature ranges, and typical solar insolation values in coastal hiking regions. They recommend that the system should be capable of producing at least 1–2 liters of potable water per day, which is generally sufficient for hydration and basic survival needs during extended treks [9]. Economic considerations are not overlooked in the literature, with cost-benefit analyses indicating that while the initial investment in high-quality components may be substantial, the long-term benefits of reliable, off-grid water production can justify the expense, particularly in regions where access to clean water is limited. Moreover, the modular nature of these systems lends itself to scalability, allowing for incremental improvements and customization based on the specific requirements of different user groups, ranging from individual hikers to small expedition teams [10].Research on the integration of smart control systems and sensors into portable desalination units has also gained traction, with some studies exploring the use of microcontrollers to monitor water quality, system pressure, and energy consumption in real time, thereby enabling automated adjustments that optimize performance and extend the lifespan of critical components. These advancements in digital monitoring are seen as a critical step towards making portable desalination technology more user-friendly and reliable in remote settings. In summary, the literature reflects a growing interest in the development of portable seawater desalination machines powered by solar panels for hikers, highlighting a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses renewable energy integration, advanced membrane technology, fluid dynamics, materials science, and user-centered design [11]. Researchers consistently emphasize the need for systems that are not only efficient and durable but also lightweight and simple enough to be deployed in challenging outdoor environments. Although many technical challenges remain such as improving energy efficiency, preventing membrane fouling, and reducing overall system weight—the progress documented in the literature suggests that portable, solar-powered desalination machines hold significant promise for providing a reliable source of clean water in remote coastal regions and during long-distance hiking expeditions[12]. Future research directions identified in these studies include the development of next-generation membranes with enhanced permeability and fouling resistance, the incorporation of advanced energy storage solutions to buffer intermittent solar power, and the design of fully integrated systems that can adapt dynamically to changes in environmental conditions. As the global demand for sustainable water sources increases, particularly in light of climate change and growing concerns about freshwater scarcity, the importance of portable desalination technologies becomes ever more apparent[13]. The convergence of solar energy and desalination not only offers a practical solution for hikers and remote communities but also contributes to a broader shift towards decentralized, renewable energy-driven water treatment systems. Continued innovation in this field is expected to yield devices that are more efficient, affordable, and accessible, thereby addressing a critical need for clean drinking water in some of the world's most challenging environments. Overall, the literature provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of portable seawater desalination technology, detailing both the technological advances and the practical considerations necessary for successful deployment in the field[14].

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## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Method

There are numerous models on the market designed to convert salty or polluted water into potable water. However, many of these systems tend to be either prohibitively expensive or require an external power source, which makes them inaccessible for many communities—especially those located in remote regions where a reliable power supply is not available. This reality underscores a critical challenge: providing low-cost potable water solutions that operate independently of conventional electricity [15]. In regions where sunlight is abundant but external power is scarce or non-existent, the primary objective is to harness solar energy to power the desalination process, thereby delivering affordable, safe drinking water to all communities. Several innovative methods have been developed to address these challenges: Rainman Desalinator: Designed specifically for cruising sailors, the Rainman Desalinator is a portable electric desalinator that utilizes a petrol-powered system driven by a Honda 50cc 4-stroke motor [16]. This model offers three standard high-output reverse osmosis options, two of which are compact enough to be packaged in a handy briefcase format. It integrates solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, thermal energy, and a heat exchanger into a single unit to purify water. By leveraging the synergy between these renewable energy sources, the Desolenator provides a portable water purification and desalination solution that is entirely powered by renewable energy (Figure 3). This system is particularly well-suited for off-grid applications where sunlight is readily available, offering a sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative. Portable Solar Powered Desalinator: This system is designed with ruggedness in mind; it is encased in a military-grade, shock-resistant, and noncorrosive case, making it highly durable under adverse conditions. Powered by any 24 V DC source, it can be run not only from portable solar panels or a dedicated solar power system but also from a vehicle's electrical system [17].Its versatile power options and robust construction make it an ideal solution for mobile operations, ensuring that potable water can be generated even in areas with minimal infrastructure. Solar Cucumber: With its distinctive design, the Solar Cucumber features a giant curved solar panel as its top, which serves as both an energy collector and an integral part of the water purification process. The system consists of floating units that collect saltwater, which is then evaporated inside an airtight vacuum chamber using solar power. This innovative design maximizes the evaporation rate and improves energy efficiency, ultimately producing potable water through condensation. In summary, while a variety of desalination models exist, many are limited by high costs and the need for external power. The challenge is to develop a system that is both affordable and capable of operating in areas where conventional energy sources are unreliable or absent. The examples above illustrate (Figure 4) different strategies for overcoming these obstacles, from portable petrol-powered models like the Rainman Desalinator to fully solar-powered systems such as the Desolenator, Portable Solar Powered Desalinator, and Solar Cucumber. By harnessing the inherent availability of sunlight, these innovative approaches aim to provide sustainable and low-cost potable water solutions to communities across diverse regions [18].

### 3.2 Functional Structu

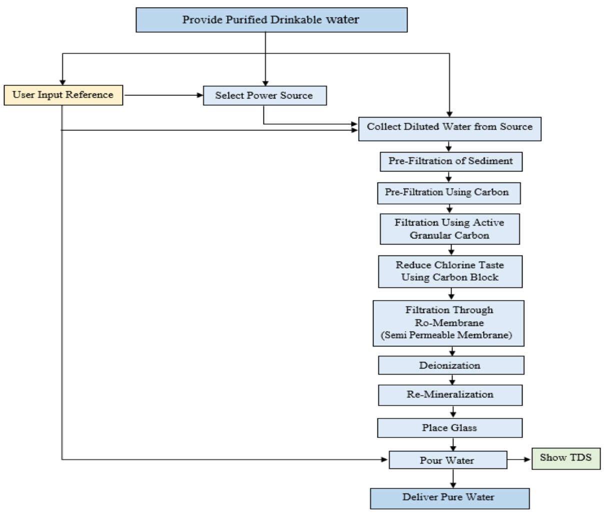


**Figure 3. Function Flow Chart 1**

A black box representation is an input/output flow diagram that shows the product function

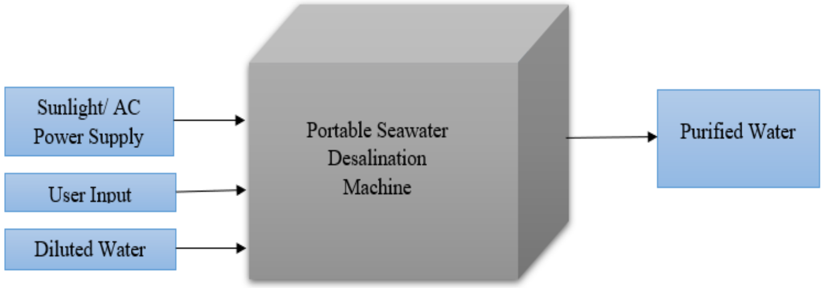


Figure 4. Black Box Model of The Portable Seawater Desalination Machine

### 3.3 Functional Structure Development II

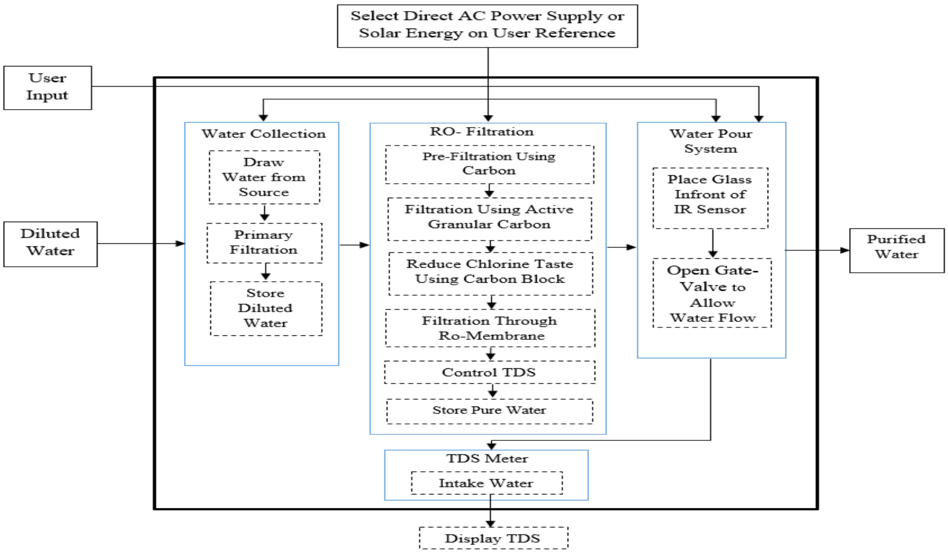


Figure 5. Functional Flow chart 2

### 3.4 Pre-Treatment of Saline Water and its Effects:

In pretreatment process the prefilter (Ironil, sediment, pre carbon filter) traps large particles such as dust, oil, iron (from the compressor), pipe scale and rust (from the pipework) and thus protects the sterilizing filter and increases its lifetime. It filters sediment, dirt, particulates, sand, and silt. The pre treatment process makes the saline water Binders free, antistatic free, lubricants free or other additives free. Naturally, water contains very small suspended particles (approximately 0.1 micron, defined as colloidal) [19]. The surface to mass ratio is huge compared to visible particles which cause them to deposit in unlimited patterns and therefore add up and thicken where they deposit.

This buildup and settling of particles on membrane surfaces leads to what is referred to as amorphous gels. These agents causing membrane foulingare intricate mixtures and are challenging, at times impossible, to remove.

Through pre-treatment, fouling is significantly reduced, if not prevented. There is also a potential decrease in the harm to reverse osmosis membranes. Basic component of membrane treatment process is shown in figure 6. [20].

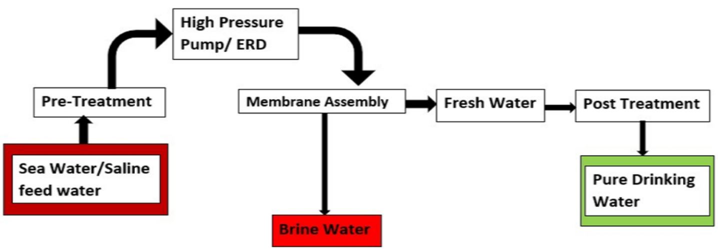


Figure 6. Basic component of membrane treatment process

The pretreatment technique to be utilized is determined by the extremes of the properties of the raw water. The benefits of the pre-treatment will be product flow optimization, salt rejection optimization and product recovery, reduction of operating costs, and reduction or decrease in cleaning frequency and membrane replacement costs [21-25]. A pre-filter's purpose is also to capture larger particles like dust and hair, preventing them from clogging the HEPA filter. However, HEPA filters have no problem capturing these large particles, so the pre-filter will NOT increase the effectiveness of the purifier[26-28]. 3.5 Characteristics: Energy Recovery in RO Systems, is an economic and efficient feature during desalination.

An essential factor for the arrangement of an RO system is energy consumption, which must be maintained at a minimal level. This, therefore, means that the recovery ratio must be as high as possible and the associated feed water pressure be kept as low as possible without compromising the standards of the quality of water produced. This process is energy intensive due to the low recovery ratio (25 % to 40 %) and the high operating pressure (60 bar to 80 bar). Based on the presently accessible potable size instrument, we can attain a fairly good output.(by using 9.65 bar motor one can achieve 20.61 l/h out flow of good water) [28-31].

The Solar Sea Water Desalination Machine with an RO UV purifier provides a practical and sustainable solution to global water scarcity by leveraging renewable solar energy. Designed for remote and coastal regions, this system integrates solar panel tracking to optimize energy absorption, TDS sensing to maintain water quality, and an automatic dispensing mechanism to enhance usability. The scalability of the system allows for applications ranging from small portable units to large-scale desalination plants. By incorporating Fresnel lenses, the desalination process can be significantly accelerated, improving efficiency and output. Additionally, moisture absorbers can be utilized in larger setups to maximize water collection, even though their efficiency may not match conventional desalination plants.

This technology is highly adaptable, making it suitable for installation near oceans, on life boats, or in emergency relief scenarios where access to drinking water is critical. The ability to infuse essential minerals before dispensing ensures that the produced water is both safe and beneficial for consumption. With a combination of reverse osmosis and UV purification, the system effectively removes contaminants, excess salinity, and harmful microorganisms, providing a reliable source of clean water.

While the current implementation shows promising results, several challenges and areas for improvement remain. Enhancing energy storage solutions is crucial to ensuring uninterrupted operation, particularly in regions with fluctuating sunlight availability. Reducing the overall cost of production and materials will also be key to making this technology more accessible on a larger scale. Additionally, the durability and maintenance of components such as filters, solar panels, and pumps must be optimized for long-term efficiency.

Ultimately, the Solar Sea Water Desalination Machine represents a significant advancement in sustainable water purification. By combining innovative technologies with renewable energy, this system has the potential to transform water access for communities facing severe water shortages, contributing to both public health and environmental sustainability.

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