

National Drinking Water Advisory Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results of a Meeting Held by The National Drinking Water Advisory Council April 30 - May 2, 1997 Washington, D.C.

Background

The Council provides practical and independent advice to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on matters and policies related to drinking water quality and hygiene, and maintains an awareness of developing issues and problems in the drinking water area and advises the Agency on emerging issues. It reviews and advises the Administrator on regulations and guidance that are required by the Safe Drinking Water Act; makes recommendations concerning necessary special studies and research; recommends policies with respect to the promulgation of drinking water standards; assists in identifying emerging environmental or health problems related to potentially hazardous constituents in drinking water; and proposes actions to encourage cooperation and communication between the Agency and other governmental agencies interested groups, the general public, and technical associations and organizations on drinking water quality.

A meeting was held at the Washington Plaza Hotel on April 30 through May 2, 1997, to provide advice to EPA and to receive briefings from EPA on emerging issues. The following recommendations and one commendation are a result of this meeting:

Recommendation 1 - Unregulated Contaminants

EPA should identify the resources necessary, and where practicable, to retrieve and make accessible the data from the unregulated contaminants monitoring to assist with the contaminant list.

Recommendation 2 - Small System Technology Affordability Issue

The Council recommends that EPA evaluate alternative definitions of affordability under the law for small system technology including the following two-step process:

1. Development of general *cost information* for various technologies (and various system sizes) as a "yardstick" which allows comparison and bench marking of each technology against the other, without prematurely eliminating technologies; and
2. Development of *income-based affordability criteria* (i.e. % of median household income) that can be applied to individual systems in various size categories.

This information can be used by systems and states in selecting appropriate technology for consideration.

Recommendation 3 - Ambient Water Quality

The Council recommends that:

EPA in its ambient water quality planning and standard setting process place protection of drinking water sources on a par with pollution reduction and ecosystem restoration. The integration of pollution reduction

and watershed planning under the Clean Water Act with the source water assessment and protection integral to safe drinking water is a priority for successful implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Examples of actions which can implement this recommendation are:

1. Ensure that when salinity standards are set for drinking water estuaries, that discharge of salinity constituents from NPDES permit holders becomes a regulated pollutant.
2. When ecosystem restoration in watershed planning proceeds, drinking water source protection is not degraded but balanced with the needs of the environment.
3. As EPA reviews and approves state prepared basin plans, the standards set for ambient water quality reflect the problems and vulnerabilities identified by drinking water uses in source water assessments and sanitary surveys.
4. EPA assess its reliance on drinking water treatment as an alternative to establishing ambient water quality standards for protection of source water.
5. Integrate to the extent allowable under the SDWA, source water protection activities for both public and private water supplies.

Commendation

The Council strongly commends EPA for initiating appropriate working groups and providing the leadership, time and resources in order to make the working group process operate smoothly and effectively and in doing so, increasing the focus and impact of Council deliberations and recommendations.

Working Group Recommendation

As a result of deliberations on the issues brought before the Council at this meeting, the Council requested the following recommendation be forwarded to the Occurrence and Contaminant Selection Working Group:

The Summary of Results statement should be modified to read:

The Candidate List can not be extensive and must be of manageable size. A preliminary assessment of technical expertise and available data indicates that 30-50 contaminants can be addressed during the five-year cycle between lists.