



A New Approach to Protecting Drinking Water and Public Health

EPA is seeking a new approach to expand public health protection for drinking water by going beyond the traditional framework that addresses contaminants one at a time. The Agency is initiating a national conversation to identify better ways to address contaminants in groups, improve drinking water technology, and more effectively address potential risks to give Americans greater confidence in the quality of their drinking water.

EPA will focus on four principles that will provide greater protection of drinking water. The four principles are:

- Address contaminants as groups rather than one at a time so that enhancement of drinking water protection can be achieved cost-effectively.
- Foster development of new drinking water technologies to address health risks posed by a broad array of contaminants.
- Use the authority of multiple statutes to help protect drinking water.
- Partner with states to share more complete data from monitoring at public water systems (PWS).

The current approach to drinking water protection focuses on a detailed assessment of each individual contaminant of concern and can take many years. This approach not only results in slow progress in addressing unregulated contaminants but also fails to take advantage of strategies for enhancing health protection cost-effectively, including advanced treatment technologies that address several contaminants at once. The outlined vision seeks to use existing authorities to achieve greater protection more quickly and cost-effectively.

EPA will engage the public and stakeholders, including utilities, rural communities, and states, in developing the new approach. Over the next few months, the Agency will:

- Hold public meetings, web casts, and use EPA's website to seek input.
- Seek advice from the National Drinking Water Advisory Council.
- Consult with the Science Advisory Board's Drinking Water Committee.
- Host workshops on drinking water technologies.

The Agency plans to seek input on four major elements listed below.

1. Address contaminants as groups rather than one at a time so that enhancement of drinking water protection can be achieved cost-effectively.

- Engage stakeholders and the public to develop technical and procedural approaches to group contaminants identify treatment technologies, and consider adverse health effects.
- As appropriate, use an approach that addresses groups of similar contaminants to develop drinking water regulations.

2. Foster development of new drinking water technologies to address health risks posed by a broad array of contaminants.

- Collaborate with universities, technology developers, and the private sector to develop water- and energy-efficient treatment technologies that can reliably reduce health risks and control the types of contaminants that confront utilities today and into the future.
- Showcase field demonstrations of large and small water treatment systems that address a broad suite of contaminants while providing safe drinking water at reasonable and predictable costs in a sustainable fashion.

3. Use the authority of multiple statutes to help protect drinking water.

- Use regulatory authority under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) to ensure that decisions made for new and existing industrial chemicals are protective of drinking water and provide relevant health effects and exposure data.
- Use FIFRA registration actions to develop risk assessments, generate missing data, and develop analytical methods to support the development of drinking water regulations.
- Tighten FIFRA pesticide registration requirements when occurrence data approaches or exceeds levels of concern.
- More fully explore EPA's chemical action plans being developed and implemented to identify synergies that can help to improve and better understand drinking water quality. This can provide the opportunity to regulate contaminants before they get into drinking water.

4. Partner with states to develop shared access to all public water systems (PWS) monitoring data.

- Promote the use of advanced information technology to facilitate information and data exchange capability between States and EPA.
- Enhance compilation and analyses of PWS information to strengthen the review of potential drinking water public health concerns without additional information collection burden and requests on states.
- Share powerful data analysis tools with states to target public health issues, program oversight, compliance assistance, and enforcement to areas where risk to public health may be high.
- Implement a range of interactive communication tools to enable states, drinking water industry, and consumers to learn more about their drinking water and obtain timely information about the quality of drinking water and performance of drinking water systems.

By pursuing these actions, EPA aims to:

- Provide more robust public health protection in an open and transparent manner.
- Assist small communities to identify cost and energy efficient treatment technologies.
- Build consumer confidence by providing more efficient sustainable treatment technologies to deliver safe water at a reasonable cost.