

Right-to-Know Working Group

September 24 and 25, 1998

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Drinking Water Advisory Council

Washington Plaza Hotel, Washington, D.C.

The Right-to-Know Working Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) held its first meeting September 24 and 25, 1998. All members except Elizabeth Treadway attended the meeting. Eileen Koutelas attended the meeting on September 24 only.

Note: These are not the official minutes. The official minutes will be developed by the working group and will be released at a later date.

I. BACKGROUND

The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) established a number of public information and public involvement provisions. EPA has completed many of its initial requirements for implementing these "Right-to-Know" pieces of the law, and has established this group to advise the full NDWAC on the appropriate next steps for integrated implementation. Consumers will soon have access to information from Consumer Confidence Reports, Source Water Assessments, Public Water System Compliance Reports) and a number of databases (including the Safe Drinking Water Information System, the National Contaminant Occurrence Database, the Index of Watershed Indicators, and the Information Collection Rule. Additionally, there are a number of new opportunities for the public to be involved in activities to protect their local drinking water, such as source water protection, or commenting on proposed intended use plans for Drinking Water State Revolving Fund money.

II. MAJOR ISSUES RAISED AND ADDRESSED AT THE MEETING

Group members introduced themselves and identified their major hopes for what the group will achieve. The group then discussed the following questions:

Consumer Confidence Reports

- What does the general public need to know about Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs)?
- How can we best prepare the public, states, and utilities to expect CCRs, to read and understand them, and to act on them?
- What are the tools or information sources that the public needs in order to use these reports effectively?
- Do particular audiences need targeted messages or tools around CCRs?

ACTION: The group agreed on a set of principles to be used in CCRs materials, and a set of recommended products.

Public Involvement and Public Participation Provisions of SDWA, and Other Local Drinking Water Information

- What are the sources of other drinking water information or data available to the public?
- What materials can EPA produce to help the public find, read, and understand this data and use it to get involved in protecting their drinking water?
- Who are the target audiences for these materials?
- How should these documents be distributed? How will they be used?
- How can EPA best help link other drinking water data with information available through Consumer Confidence Reports?
- How can EPA and others best make use of the Internet as a major tool? What are the best ways to get information to people who do not have access to the Internet?

ACTION: The group agreed on a set of principles and recommended products.

State of the Nation's Drinking Water Report

- What are the major issues to highlight in reviewing 25 years of the Safe Drinking Water Act?

ACTION: The group agreed to review a draft outline for such a report and provide comments to EPA.

Safe Drinking Water Act 25th Anniversary Observance

- The 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Safe Drinking Water Act is December 16, 1999
- EPA is facilitating a group of partners who have volunteered to work together to plan some events and materials to observe the 25 years of SDWA. The group has so far agreed on an action plan, logo and theme, which are available to all to use during the year. The action plan includes a comprehensive information kit describing all parts of the SDWA program and culminating in a Futures Forum in which stakeholders discuss where the drinking water program should be after the next 25 years (2024).

ACTION: The group agreed the 25th anniversary was an important opportunity and will continue to work with the planning committee.

Additional Action items .

- The group agreed on a mission statement
- The group agreed to recommend to NDWAC that public information materials also include some facts on bottled water.
- The group agreed to recommend that NDWAC strongly recommend that utilities add the EPA web addresses as well as the hotline address to their CCR's, and link their page (if one exists) to the EPA CCR web page.

III. NEXT STEPS

The workgroup will hold a conference call on Wednesday, November 4 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m., EST. At that time, the workgroup will confirm the recommendations made at this meeting, which members will report to the full NDWAC at its November meeting.