FACT SHEET

Addressing Emerging Contaminants in Private Wells in Small or Disadvantaged Communities

One or more owners of drinking water wells that are not public water systems (PWSs) or connected to a PWS, also referred to as "private wells,", are eligible beneficiaries of fiscal year (FY) 2024 funding from the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) and the Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities (SUDC) grant programs. It is up to States and Territories to decide which beneficiaries to prioritize for funding.

EC-SDC and SUDC Grant Programs

The EC-SDC grant program was provided $5 billion in fiscal years 2022-2026 in an amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Section 1459A to help address emerging contaminants[1] (ECs) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water in small or disadvantaged communities. In FY24, the EPA allotted $945.7 million to States and Territories.

The SUDC grant program was established by Congress to help PWSs in small, underserved, and disadvantaged communities comply with SDWA regulations, including those related to regulated contaminants and PFAS. The EPA first received appropriations for the SUDC grant program in FY18. In FY24, the agency allotted $25 million to States and Territories.

For both programs, recipients must ensure funded projects benefit communities that are small[2] or disadvantaged[3]. Current recipients include all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The SUDC grant program also requires that the benefitting community be underserved[4].

New FY24 Eligibilities for Private Wells

Congress authorized that the funds appropriated through the FY 2024 appropriation[5] for the SUDC and EC-SDC programs can be used to help benefit private wells for necessary and appropriate activities related to ECs[1]. This use is in addition to existing eligibilities under both the SUDC and EC-SDC programs. Congress directed the EPA to encourage that grant beneficiaries making less than the average household income in their State or Territory are prioritized.

EXAMPLE FY24 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Initial, non-routine sampling and testing for ECs or PFAS
- Initial point of entry treatment (POE) and/or point of use treatment (POU) filters
- Building a new well
- Capping wells
- Rebate or subsidy programs
- Post-remediation testing for ECs or PFAS
- Consolidating with a PWS

[1] ECs include any contaminant from EPA's Contaminant Candidate Lists, such as manganese, perchlorate, 1-4 dioxane, and cyanotoxins.

[2] A small community has a population less than 10,000 and insufficient capacity to incur debt to finance a project as defined by SDWA section 1459A(c).

[3] A disadvantaged community is defined by a State's affordability criteria as established in the State's Drinking Water Safe Revolving Fund program per SDWA Section 1452(d)(3).

[4] An underserved community has an inadequate system for obtaining drinking water as defined in SDWA section 1459A(a).

[5] The FY 2024 appropriation, P.L. 118-42 (Mar. 8, 2024)

Addressing PFAS Contamination in Private Wells

The EPA estimates that more than 23 million households rely on private wells for drinking water in the United States. Drinking water wells can be susceptible to PFAS contamination that can potentially expose residents and threaten public health. The quality and safety of drinking water from these wells are not regulated by the federal government under the Safe Drinking Water Act and, therefore, National Primary Drinking Water Regulations, such as EPA's PFAS Rule (40 CFR Parts 141 and 142) do not apply to wells that are not part of a PWS. The owners of these wells are responsible for ensuring they supply safe drinking water.

MORE ABOUT PFAS

PFAS are a category of widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to adverse health effects in humans and animals.

Several States have developed EC-SDC workplans that include projects addressing PFAS in private wells. Although the approaches vary, each State tends to:

(1) Identify qualifying drinking water wells, using State-specific criteria for small or disadvantaged communities;
(2) Test qualifying drinking water wells for the presence of PFAS and other emerging contaminants; and
(3) Fund strategies to address PFAS contamination in drinking water wells, ranging from increasing access to a POE treatment system to increasing a homeowner's ability to connect to a PWS.

Examples of State Implementation of FY24 Funding

State 1: Assistance to Private Well Owners

Implementation Timeline: FY24 – FY29
FY24 Funding Received: ~$3M
Grant Program: EC-SDC

Plan Overview:

1. Support remediation options by creating a grant program for homeowners found to have PFAS through testing conducted by the State's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.
2. Test private wells along proposed or active water main extensions or public water system consolidations. Fund service connections where PFAS is found.
3. Organize one or more PFAS sampling and training event(s) per year in a disadvantaged community with limited access to a PWS.

Target Outputs: State 1 plans to allocate 50 percent of FY24 funding to assist the owners of private wells and conduct at least one community PFAS sampling event per year.

State 2: PFAS Removal Rebate Program

Implementation Timeline: FY24 – FY30
FY24 Funding Received: ~$9.5M
Grant Program: EC-SDC

Plan Overview:

1. Test private wells for PFAS and other eligible emerging contaminants. (~$8.1M)
2. Complete lab analysis for community private well testing. (~$900K)
3. Provide qualified private well owners a $5K rebate to install a POE treatment system or a $10K rebate to connect to a PWS. (~$423K)

Target Outputs: State 2 estimates 2,500-3,500 wells per year will be tested, and ~60 total properties on private wells will receive a rebate to install treatment or connection to a PWS under this workplan.

State 3: Investigation and Treatment of PFAS in Private Wells

Implementation Timeline: FY25 – FY29
FY24 Funding Received: ~$9.5M
Grant Program: EC-SDC

Plan Overview:

1. Identify private drinking water wells in rural areas located within 0.25 miles of an identified potential PFAS source (e.g., fire station, dump, landfill, car wash, airport, biosolids land application site). (~$125K)
2. Identify and prioritize testing of private wells near PWS detections based on the level of exceedance and the density of wells. (~$50K)
3. Test private wells. (~$2.8M)
4. Provide connections to PWSs or install POU/POE treatment systems in homes exceeding State 3's PFAS Interim Drinking Water Standards. (~$6M)

Target Outputs: State 3 estimates ~500 samples from private wells will be analyzed each year (~2,500 total), and ~300 POE treatment systems will be installed.

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