Tackling Emerging Contaminants (TEC) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is TEC?

The Tackling Emerging Contaminants (TEC) initiative is a Real Water Technical Assistance (RealWaterTA) initiative that provides technical assistance to small or disadvantaged communities to assess and address emerging contaminants and perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water. TEC aims to further the administration of the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) grant program by delivering direct, individualized technical assistance to water systems eligible for the EC-SDC grant.

What kind of services can TEC provide to water utilities?

TEC assists small or disadvantaged communities nationwide to assess and address emerging contaminants and PFAS in their public water system, help water utilities comply with the PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR), and help more water utilities apply for and utilize funding, including from the EC-SDC grant and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). TEC's services are contractor-supported and are offered at no cost to water utilities. These services include:

- **Sampling and analysis activities**, including monitoring to comply with the PFAS NPDWR, sampling plans, laboratory analyses, and water quality evaluation reports.
- **Technical plans,** including alternatives analysis, preliminary engineering reports, and source water protection plans.
- **Implementation support / funding deliverables,** including identifying funding options and preparation of funding application materials such as cost estimates or preliminary engineering reports.
- **Operational training support,** including sampling training, operator training for new treatment systems, operation manuals, and standard operating procedures.
- **Public outreach plans,** including developing outreach strategies in collaboration with the water system, providing customer education and risk communications about PFAS or emerging contaminants, identifying and hosting public events and other opportunities to residents, and sharing relevant and accessible information with the public.

Does TEC offer funding to communities?

No, TEC does not offer funding. It offers free and direct technical assistance to small and/or disadvantaged communities to help them assess and address emerging contaminants and PFAS. TEC supports implementation of the EC-SDC grant by helping water utilities access those funds and other available infrastructure funds to address PFAS or emerging contaminant concerns.

Which water systems are eligible for support from TEC?

To participate in TEC, water systems must meet EC-SDC eligibility requirements for small or disadvantaged communities described in section 1459A of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA):

"Disadvantaged Community" is one determined by the state to be disadvantaged under the affordability criteria established by the state under section 1452(d)(3) of the SDWA or may become a disadvantaged community as a result of carrying out a project or activity under the grant program. As with the DWSRF program, each state has statutory discretion to set its own criteria.

"Small Community" is one that has a population of less than 10,000 individuals that the Administrator determines does not have the capacity to incur debt sufficient to finance a project or activity under the grant

program. This is a statutory definition.

How can my water system receive this technical assistance?

Water systems can request TEC via the online RealWaterTA Request Form. The EPA will also consult with States, Tribes, Territories, and other stakeholders to identify water systems that may benefit from this technical assistance.

What contaminants can be addressed with TEC?

Projects addressing regulated and/or unregulated PFAS are eligible for TEC. TEC can also provide assistance with addressing concerns related to any of the contaminants listed in any of the EPA's Contaminant Candidate Lists (CCLs) that do not have a proposed or promulgated NPDWR. Examples include lithium, manganese, and 1,4-dioxane. Other than PFAS, TEC cannot address contaminants for which the EPA has set a maximum contaminant level (MCL) under the NPDWR.

Who will be conducting the work for TEC?

The services provided by TEC will be conducted by the EPA and their contractors in coordination with water systems and states. The contractors are experienced in working with drinking water systems in different areas, including technical aspects, funding access, and public outreach, to address emerging contaminants and PFAS.

Can my sampling results from TEC be used for the PFAS NPDWR initial monitoring sampling?

Yes, PFAS sampling results from TEC can be used by the water system to help address initial monitoring requirements. The water systems are ultimately responsible for understanding the sampling requirements and following the timeframes needed to meet the requirement in the regulation (see 40 CFR 141.902(b)(1)). Additional information regarding the PFAS NPDWR can be found on the EPA SDWA website.

Can I receive assistance from TEC if I'm already working with another TA provider?

Yes, TEC can complement the work of other TA providers.

Are private well owners eligible?

No, TEC does not assist private wells or individuals; TEC's services are only available to public water systems. Private well owners may be eligible for certain other EPA funding programs and services. Please visit the EPA Training and Technical Assistance for Small Systems and EC-SDC grant program pages for more information.

Do water systems need to pay for TEC?

No, the services provided by TEC are at no cost to the water utility. In order for the projects to be successful, the water utility's participation, which will involve time (e.g., gathering data) and coordination resources, is critical.

Will TEC produce any publicly available resources?

Yes, the EPA will create tools and case studies to share information and best practices with State and Tribal programs, water system managers, and community leaders.

What kind of water quality monitoring technical assistance can TEC provide?

TEC can assist water systems with water quality monitoring to identify and characterize the presence of emerging contaminants and PFAS. TEC can support evaluating historical operational and water quality data, as well as sampling for emerging contaminants and PFAS in water for initial monitoring requirements or

investigative needs. TEC can also help community water systems develop sampling and analysis plans, quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) plans, and provide operator training to support subsequent monitoring. Specific assistance will be tailored to the needs of the water system. TEC cannot conduct routine compliance monitoring.

How can TEC assist communities to address emerging contaminant and PFAS contamination?

TEC can assist water utilities with identifying and developing projects for their water system to address emerging contaminant and PFAS contamination, including assisting with assessing project alternatives, project planning and design, developing preliminary engineering reports (PERs), and feasibility analyses. TEC can also assist with source water protection planning activities related to emerging contaminants and PFAS, and support for the development or update of source water protection assessments and plans to address emerging contaminants and PFAS, including evaluating alternate sources. TEC also supports water utilities with identifying and preparing funding applications for financial resources to address emerging contaminants in their drinking water. Specific assistance will be tailored to the needs of the water utility.

How can TEC assist operational training?

TEC can provide technical assistance with operational training support, such as developing operations manuals, new treatment system operator training, sampling training, and other technical assistance to ensure proper operations of water utilities to address emerging contaminants and PFAS. Specific assistance will be tailored to the needs of the water utility.

What kind of public outreach support can TEC provide?

TEC can assist with developing public outreach materials for use by the water utility. These materials can be used to educate residents on risks related to PFAS or emerging contaminants, and to communicate how the utility is working to protect public health by assessing and addressing these contaminants. TEC can also assist with educational materials related to understanding the PFAS NPDWR to promote compliance. Materials can be tailored for specific audiences and translated into locally relevant languages. Specific assistance will be tailored to the needs of the water utility.

What is the difference between TEC and RealWaterTA?

EPA RealWaterTA is the overarching initiative that aims to assist water utilities, local governments, and communities with challenges such as, but not limited to, updating aging infrastructure, returning to and maintaining compliance, and accessing financial assistance. TEC is one of many initiatives under the RealWaterTA umbrella.