

Small Systems Implementation Working Group

Teleconference January 21, 1999

Executive Summary

The NDWAC Small Systems Implementation Working Group met via teleconference on January 21, 1999 to discuss the draft report entitled "Small Water System Characteristics". At its first meeting in November, 1998, the working group agreed that a comprehensive, objective compilation of existing data describing small systems characteristics was necessary as a basis for future discussion of policy options. EPA's contractor, The Cadmus Group, Inc., developed the draft report drawing upon data from The 1995 Community Water Systems Survey, the Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey, and the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS).

The working group expressed overall satisfaction with the draft report, but offered a number of recommendations for improvement. The group discussed the report in terms of its overall presentation and organization as well as in terms of its substantive content.

In terms of its overall presentation and organization the group felt that the draft made good use of charts and graphs but that the charts needed to be larger so that they could be more easily read. The desirability of keeping explanatory text close to the chart was also agreed upon. Other suggestions for improving the charts included: using cross-hatching rather than shading to distinguish different bars or pie sections; including actual values over bars; making the figure number more prominent; and using facing pages where a series of charts should be kept together. Other report formatting suggestions were to make chapter subsections more prominent; develop an executive summary and table of contents; move tables from the back of the report into the body of the report; and to develop a textual summary table at the end of each chapter which would capture the main information presented in the chapter.

In terms of substantive content, the working group identified several areas of needed clarification and revision. It was agreed that Section 5 on infrastructure needs should be expanded to include discussion of other estimates of infrastructure needs beyond the EPA Needs Survey. The group also agreed that early in the report it was necessary to make clear that we have little data about noncommunity water systems and to highlight the need for additional data. The need to more fully explain data sources at the beginning of the report was also agreed to. Other recommended improvements include: clarification related to population served data, in particular the time over which they are served; addition of a chart showing proportion of population served by systems of various ownership types; figures related to water system revenue need additional clarifying detail and in some cases revision; data and figures relating to water system expenses should be added to complement the revenue figures; revision of discussion about economies of scale in O&M; and Section 6 on compliance needs to be significantly expanded. A couple of charts which are poorly scaled or don't match the text were identified for revision. The usefulness of population as a normalizing parameter was agreed upon as was the need to further consider sources of data to characterize areas of rapid growth.

The group agreed that its next meeting on March 1-2, 1999 in Baltimore, MD (in conjunction with the Rural Community Assistance Program National Meeting) will focus on review of the next draft of the "Small Water System Characteristics" report and on the existing regulatory requirements for small systems.

Peter Shanaghan highlighted for the working group the newly revised groundrules. The major change relates to the designation of an alternate in emergency situations when a member cannot attend a meeting. The alternate should be a peer of the member. On only one occasion may an association staff person serve as a member's alternate. Alternates do not vote.

Members Participating

Jerry C. Biberstine
Mark Bugher
Bruce Florquist
Andrea Griese
J.W. Hellums, Jr.
Christine Hoover
E. Leon Jacobs, Jr.
Diane K. Kiesling
Kirk Leifheit
Charles Maddox
John Scheltens
Peter E. Shanaghan
David R. Siburg
Blanca Surgeon
Curtis L. Truss, Jr.
Michael Walsh
Bon Wendeglass

Members Absent

Patrick Banegas
Michael A. Dimitriou
Yvette DiPieza
Jim Dunlap
Paul Felz
Gary Morgan