

Meeting Minutes

Drinking Water Advisory Group Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Location: Kent, WA with video conference to Spokane regional office

Time: 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

1. Clark Halvorson: **Welcome and emerging issues**

- Discussion for today's meeting:
 - Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program
 - Satellite management agency (SMA) program
 - Rules updates
- Other emerging issues:
 - Water availability is a complicated topic; we're working with the Department of Ecology.
 - The new Group B Rule goes into effect January 1, 2014 and the Operator Certification rule goes into effect January 4, 2014.
 - Sentry, our data system, is outdated and we have to make the decision to move to the federal system, SIDWIS Prime, or stabilize it by converting to a ".NET" framework.

2. Chris McCord: **DWSRF—How to keep the revolving fund revolving**

- Program has been around since 1997 and is based on federal funding passed through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Because of cuts to public works money, our program is more appealing.
 - Our interest rate is currently 1.5 percent compared to the Public Works Board's (Board) at about 3 percent.
- Currently exploring the use of interest rates as incentives.
- **Key items we have tried to address from your input:**
 - Talking to recipients of DWSRF money to see how they're going to use it.
 - Execute the contract sooner.
 - Update our website.
 - Section 106 (environmental and cultural review).
 - Preconstruction funding to enable projects to be "shovel ready."
- **Current loan cycle activities:**
 - List of unfunded projects shared with the USDA Rural Development.
 - The formal funding list will go to the Board in January.
 - Our goal is to get contracts signed in 60 days.
- **Some of the challenges:**
 - We used to have five years to spend this money, now we're hearing EPA's goal is for the money to be used in two years.
 - Give the money when projects are bid-ready, after planning, design, and environmental/cultural review are completed.

3. Linda Kildahl: **Satellite management agency (SMA) program**

- The program started in 1991 to support and encourage the professional management operation of small water systems.
- Success of satellite management agencies (SMAs) reflects on the program's success.
- In 1995, legislation strengthened the UOC program and incorporated it into our Group A rule.
 - Required new water systems seek SMA ownership and or management.
- We are currently looking at how to improve the program and eliminate confusion.
- **Next steps:**
 - Work with an internal workgroup.
 - Solicit broad stakeholder input.
 - Possibly forming an external workgroup with stakeholders.
- **Feedback from previous training sessions:**
 - SMAs need incentives.
 - Include better access to funding, leniency around compliance and enforcement, difference between non-ownership SMAs and ownership SMAs, importance of agency support, and contract operators vs. SMAs.
 - There is a disconnect between the planning program and SMAs.
 - We need to be seen as a partner.
- We will begin reviewing input in January or February 2014. We hope to make final proposals/recommendations to our Executive Management Team in summer 2014.

Comments from meeting participants:

1. While SMAs are figuring out issues of the water system, there should be some leniency because it takes time to be able to fix issues to meet agency requirements.
2. I encourage you to keep your external workgroup process open and talk to local health jurisdictions. It would be helpful if you'd firmly distinguish how you are defining operating versus maintenance for SMAs.
3. SMAs would like the agency to back them up more when they are taking over a system. It would be helpful if you would talk to the water system's board monthly.
4. I agree with more agency involvement. A letter can be powerful in a non-threatening way – keep the line of communication open.

4. Theresa Phillips: **Rules update**

- **Group B public water systems:**
 - Our current Group B Rule will expire December 31, 2013. The new rule is effective January 1, 2014.
 - New rule will have more stringent design elements, eliminates two-connection systems; and won't require routine monitoring.
 - We made extensive updates to our Group B website.

- **Waterworks operator certification:**
 - Rule becomes effective January 4, 2014.
 - We updated this website with supporting documents.
 - Program staff are working to update guidance for this rule.
- **Group A public water supplies:**
 - There is high need and interest in improving disinfection requirements for Group A water systems.
 - We took this recommendation forward and received approval from the State Board of Health to begin rule making on planning and disinfection requirements.
 - Will send notice to stakeholders in the next few months about this combined rule making.
- **Revised total coliform rule:**
 - Rule making is on hold until EPA provides clear guidance.
- **Drinking water lab data reporting rule:**
 - Goal is to adopt rule language to ensure data reporting is consistent.
 - Applies to written and electronic data reporting.
 - Our data systems is currently in the process of converting to a nationally compatible data structure. This makes it impossible to clearly define the electronic submitting structure until there is more clarity.
 - We plan to move forward on written data requirements.
 - Once the conversion process is complete, we will test the data platform with laboratories to adopt permanent electronic reporting requirements.
- **Rule publications:**
 - More information about this at our next meeting.

5. Clark: **Queuing up the next meeting**

- **Meeting frequency:**
 - In general, how does it work for you?
 - Will hold meetings every other month as long as we have topics.
 - Scheduled to meet again in February 2014.
- **Topics:**
 - Please send us an email with your topic ideas.

Items to note:

A few things we heard from EPA:

- Guidance for the Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) will be out by January 2014.
- The House passed House Resolution 3588, exempting fire hydrants from the Lead and Copper Rule. The Senate has not voted on this issue yet.

Feedback:

- This meeting format is working well.
- Share legislative information as soon as possible so our stakeholders can help.
- A couple of attendees mentioned that Mondays work better for meetings than Wednesdays.