



Fact Sheet

Group A Public Water Supplies • Chapter 246-290 WAC

# Water System Planning Rule Changes

September 2016

## Background

Water systems that submit water system plans have been required to update their plans every six years. For many of these water systems, the health benefit may not justify the cost of this requirement. The goal is to streamline regulations, reduce costs, provide clarity, and improve consistency. The proposed rule increases flexibility for systems to develop the plan that best fits their needs and the needs of local planning agencies that may rely on water system plans to determine the availability and capacity of public water providers within their jurisdictions.

## Water system plan approval period

The proposed rule extends the approval period for water system plans from six years to ten years with the option to choose a shorter timeframe. The forecasting requirements for key planning elements are extended to align with the new approval timeframe, including water demand forecasting, water resource analyses, capital improvement programs, and budgeting. Other planning elements, including water use efficiency programs, source water protection and watershed control programs are also changing to ten-year update cycles.

## Water system plan submittals

The proposed rule removes the term, “expanding system” as a plan submittal trigger and replaces it with the following specific actions.

- Increase or modify the service area identified in an approved planning document; or
- Increase or modify the geographical area where service is currently provided if a planning document has not been previously approved; or
- Install additions, extensions, or changes to existing infrastructure AND requesting to increase the approved number of service connections.

The new submittal triggers allow systems to submit a project report instead of a plan if they are proposing to:

- Increase the approved number of connections within their service area without installing new facilities (e.g., using water use efficiency savings or other existing excess capacity); or
- Install replacement or redundant infrastructure without increasing the approved number of connections.

The proposed rule also adds a plan submittal requirement for systems that seek to receive or to continue receiving a department approval for an unspecified number of connections.

## **Other planning submittals**

**Water system plan amendments:** The proposed rule adds a new section that clarifies conditions and options for submitting a plan amendment. The rule allows systems to amend their plan at any time during the current planning cycle and clarifies that an amendment does not alter the current plan approval date or the next date for the plan update.

**Small Water System Management Programs:** The proposed rule establishes that systems seeking existing system as-built approval must submit a Small Water System Management Program as part of their submittal package.

## **Service area requirements**

The proposed rule makes the following “service area” changes.

- Eliminates “existing service area” definition and incorporates the concept into the “service area” definition.
- Revises “future service area” definition to apply only to systems located in Critical Water Supply Service Areas (CWSSA).
- Revises “service area” definition to require that systems located in CWSSA include their future service area as part of their service area.
- Expands the requirement for municipal water suppliers to demonstrate consistency with local plans and development regulations to the service area.
- Eliminates the requirement for municipal water suppliers to meet certain conditions before extending service outside the retail service area and into their approved service area or future service area.

## **For more information**

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