



# the WATER TAP

WASHINGTON'S DRINKING WATER NEWSLETTER

## An Interview with Mary Selecky



On March 15 of this year, Governor Locke nominated Mary Selecky to be the new Secretary of the Department of Health - a position

she had held on an acting basis since October of last year. The Senate quickly confirmed the Governor's nomination, with broad support from both parties.

Selecky had been the administrator of the Northeast Tri-County Health District for 20 years. Though her position focused on rural and public health services in Northeast Washington, she was also very active in both state and national health organizations and issues. She played a major role in the creation of the state's Department of Health and in the development of the Public Health Improvement Plan.

In the following interview with a Water Tap staff member, Mary offers her observations on public health, drinking water, and the role of the Department of Health.

*What kind of experience did you have with drinking water issues when you were in your previous position? How does that relate to your new job?*

In Northeast Tri-County Health District, we had a number of public health challenges related to the environment. What we had to do was understand how these environmental issues - including water - fit within our overall goal of health protection. The tri-county population of about 57,000 was almost entirely on private wells, and we focused our efforts on them. For instance, when there was flooding in Pend Oreille and Ferry Counties in the past couple of years, we offered no-cost

bacteriological tests of water from private wells, because we knew the increased risk of contamination warranted that step. We also knew we needed to communicate how important it is to maintain adequate separation between septic drain fields and people's wells. That's something that people can understand, and a proper role for a local health department. On the other hand, we had a close - and good - relationship with the DOH Drinking Water office in Spokane for those things that they were best at - like dealing with water system issues. As head of the Department of Health, one of my priorities is having clear and well-defined roles within an overall partnership of public health protection.

*Have you been surprised by anything about the state's Drinking Water Program within DOH?*

Well, one thing is the magnitude of the job. We have over 16,000 water systems in the state, serving something like 80 to 90 percent of the state's population. It's a major effort just to stay on top of this job. Key to it is maintaining adequate and accurate data, which is driving a high priority - and very expensive - revision to the Drinking Water data system, which is absolutely necessary to do. This became very apparent when we were recently asked by the Governor to provide information on water quality at the state's migrant labor camps. We discovered that we couldn't get the information we needed from our data system. As a result we will be out visiting over 200 such camps over the next few months in order to get it. This is absolutely the right thing to do. But I expect that when we get the information, we will not only

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**Coming this Fall -  
Monitoring Requirements  
Made Easy**

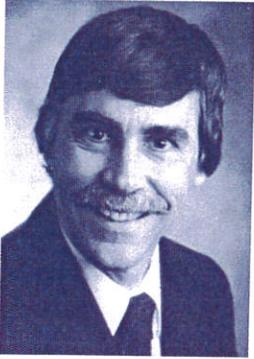
*This fall, DOH will begin providing each water system an annual report listing the next years' required water quality monitoring, along with a set of instructions.*

*Check out the September issue for complete details on this new service.*

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# THE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Every one of us that works to provide safe drinking water faces huge challenges in carrying out the 1996 amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. I have said this before, but I think it bears repeating.

The Department of Health, as a regulatory agency, will be attempting to implement a growing number of regulatory activities without benefit of an increase in resources. This challenge had us turning for advice, once again, to the Water Supply Advisory Committee. In response, the Advisory Committee has formed a new subcommittee that will help us sort through a pair of critical issues.

The subcommittee will first consider long-term funding options for the drinking water program and examine ways that the program might move forward on this issue. Our goal here is to have a clear and stable funding base on which to operate our basic public health protection program in the future. The other issue the subcommittee will consider is the appropriate scope of the drinking water program, and where to put the program's limited resources. This could result in some fundamental changes in what the drinking water program does and how it does it. The subcommittee will meet over the next several months. We hope to have a set of recommendations from the WSAC by the spring of next year.

You will be hearing more from me about this important work, soon. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts or ideas about how the drinking water program can establish new, stable funding or how the program should allocate the funding it has, I would like to hear from you. Are there program funding ideas you think we should consider? What components of the drinking water program do you think are critical to the public health, and what components do you think are less important? Send me an email (GLG1303@doh.wa.gov) or write me (Department of Health, Division of Drinking Water, P.O. Box 47822, Olympia 98504-7822). I would appreciate hearing from you.

## Director Accepts National Leadership Position

Gregg Grunenfelder, director of the Department of Health Drinking Water Division, recently was chosen president-elect of the national Association of State Drinking Water Administrators. A member of the Association's board of directors since October 1997, his term as president will begin in October 2000.

"This group represents drinking water programs in all 50 states and six U.S territories, and is a highly respected voice with Congress, EPA and dozens of professional organizations," Grunenfelder said. "I'm looking forward to playing a key role in working through the association to advance the public health protection priorities of state drinking water programs."

## An Upstream Year with the Legislature

After much effort and debate centering on water and salmon, the Legislature adjourned in April without having passed any significant legislation on water issues. The threat posed by the National Marine Fisheries Service putting several species of salmon and steelhead on its threatened or endangered lists had led Governor Locke to request a package of changes in water law. The Legislature chose not to make those changes. It did provide significant increases in staff and funding for a variety of agencies to carry out water-related activities, including the Department of Health. DOH will gain seven staff positions and \$1.3 million to increase water conservation and reuse activities, half of which is contingent on the state's receiving federal funds for this work.

The Legislature did pass a few water bills not related to salmon. These included a bill that authorizes a public utility district to provide water service outside the county it is located in, a bill that allows water systems adjacent to the Canadian border to acquire their water from Canada, and a bill that requires a study of Department of Natural Resource logging practices in the Lake Whatcom watershed.

DOH was successful with one piece of drinking water request legislation during the session. The Legislature passed SB 5105 to modify the definition of a public water system so it reflects changes made by Congress in 1996. Without the passage of SB 5105, DOH would not be meeting its obligation to administer a drinking water program that covers all water systems that the federal law covers.

(continued from page 1)

evaluate water quality, but will also look at how DOH collects such information, and ways we can improve. I have been impressed by how DOH staff respond to public health emergencies and extraordinary demands, but we also need to get better at anticipating things, and be out front on emerging issues. This is important in lots of areas, but very important for drinking water, because as science provides us with more information on health threats related to our consumption of water, we need to be prepared to provide good advice to the public and adequate oversight to water systems.

*It sounds like you view communication as a key area?*

I think that communicating is the most important challenge facing us right now. We at DOH, and in public health, are often tempted to just tell "what we know," like data, or facts, or policy, or regulations. What we need to ask ourselves is "What is being asked of us? Who is asking? What can they hear and understand from us?" Addressing these questions will help us communicate better with the public, elected officials, citizens, stakeholders - including water utilities - and the media. DOH staff, local health officials, and water system operators need to be mindful that it's the end user that is important here. That's whose health we're trying to protect, and that's who we have to communicate with. And we need to explain the work that we do in language that everyone can understand.

*Much of what we do at the state level is related to EPA and the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. How do you view our relationship with EPA, and how do you expect to address the continuing challenge of implementing a more and more complex set of federal requirements?*

Well, clearly we have to have a set of partnerships, and it will probably have to be done on a program-by-program basis. We will have to develop creative ways of communicating requirements, and empowering people who will have the responsibility for implementing them. By this I mean that, at least for drinking water, DOH is not set up to deliver direct services - we're organized to provide technical assistance. How, when, and to what extent we provide that assistance is going to require a lot of evaluation. We might, for instance, add staff to manage an expanded publications program, which could provide useful materials to water systems. I fully expect to engage EPA as a partner, as we have on the migrant labor camp issue. I think that they could be particularly effective in helping

us explain the underlying health rationale for any new federal requirements. We and EPA know that what is expected from us under the SDWA is more than we all can realistically do, and will be particularly burdensome for small systems. My impression is that, at least in this part of the country, EPA has been very reasonable in what it expects. As the SDWA

requirements continue to expand, one of my challenges will be to have DOH pull it together, in conjunction with EPA and others most affected by the law.

*During the recent legislative session, most attention in the water area was focused on its relationship to the need to address the threatened and endangered species of salmon and other fish. Does DOH have a role to play in this?*

Probably the single question I was asked most during the session was "why are you here?" when I participated in Cabinet-level discussions on salmon issues. Part of the answer is pretty easy. In order to do the job we've been assigned by the Legislature on conservation and reuse, DOH is the conduit for the message on the sound use of water. This is good work, and certainly fits within our goal of ensuring reliable supplies of drinking water. However, I think that both DOH and the water system operators will have to stretch our relationship, and our fundamental public health job, to fit this objective within the state's salmon strategy,

and make it work. I recognize that some water utilities may not view us as an adequate advocate of their interests within state government. But I think that we have to bear in mind that our customer is not the utility, it's the end user of the water. We don't do this easily, because it's not the 4.8 million water system customers that we're talking to every day. But we need to focus on the end user - such as migrant laborers - and not just the people who deliver the water. That's why the Consumer Confidence Report can be such a powerful tool - it puts important information directly into the hands of those users.

*So what's the most important issue you think we face?*

As I said, we need to explain our work in everyday, understandable language. People really do take for granted safe drinking water, and other things that we do in public health. We need to let other people know that keeping them healthy is a result of a lot of people doing their job, and that the public can play a major role, both in their own health choices and in the support they provide for this good work. Continuing to provide health protection is government's job, and I'm proud to be a government person who does that.

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"I have been impressed by how DOH staff respond to public health emergencies and extraordinary demands, but we also need to get better at anticipating things, and be out front on emerging issues."  
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# About Face at Icicle Creek

Not so long ago, the City of Leavenworth could operate its 30-year-old water treatment plant at Icicle Creek on 200 days out of the year. Water quality had been marginal, at best, for 25 years. Poor performance at the plant had contributed to a 1980 outbreak of Giardiasis. Stan Adams, the plant's current operator, says that it had "constant" turbidity violations. Ultimately, the plant lost Department of Health filtration credit.

In 1996, Leavenworth was uncertain if the existing plant could ever adequately serve the community. There was talk about replacing it - and concern about how much that would cost.

At the Department of Health's recommendation, the city asked for bids from firms offering a composite correction program. The composite correction program helps a community use existing facilities, if at all possible, to achieve desired water quality. An outside contractor evaluates a water system to find out what performance-limiting factors are unique to it. The contractor then identifies specific improvements that the system can make in operations, maintenance and administration to help it meet regulatory requirements. Because it is significantly less expensive to update existing systems than to build a new plant, the composite correction program is especially attractive to cost-conscious communities like Leavenworth.

After analyzing virtually every aspect of the Icicle Creek plant - for example, testing process limitations at extremes of flow and temperature, and performing numerous jar tests to identify an effective coagulation scheme - the city made minor

modifications to the physical plant. However, it made major improvements in plant operations. Treatment concepts not previously applied were introduced, and plant operations staff were trained to improve process control testing and record keeping.

Today the plant has demonstrated filtered water turbidity performance consistently in the 0.01 to 0.02 Ntu range for a year, far below the regulatory limit. It is now able to remain on line with raw water turbidities of up to 60.0 Ntu, allowing it to operate an additional 100 days per year.

Because of improved removal of particles, the Department of Health has restored Leavenworth's filtration credit. Not only has the composite correction program provided new life at an aging facility, at bargain basement prices, but it has also resulted in the best water quality the city has ever seen, reduced public health risks, and produced increased pride and confidence for the operating staff who make it so.



## Officials, Customers Celebrate New Walla Walla Plant

Congratulations to the City of Walla Walla on the official "grand opening" of the city's new water treatment plant. In addition to being an important public health project, the new ozone treatment facility was the first project to be completed in Washington using the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan program, administered by the state Department of Health (DOH) and the Public Works Board.

Pictured from left to right: Mark Richardson, contractor; Gregg Grunenfelder, Department of Health; Scott Trussler, consulting engineer; Walla Walla Mayor Fred Mitchell; Eleanor Kane, citizen advisory committee; Pete Butkus, Public Works Board.

# Consumer Confidence Report Tips...

Remember that the first consumer confidence report is due October 19, 1999. Here are some tips to help you meet this important new regulation.

## *Drinking Water Division homepage*

The Drinking Water Division provides information about Consumer Confidence Reports on the division's homepage at <[www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw)>. If you do not have access to the Internet at your workplace, check out your local library, schools or commercial copy center.

## *Information available from EPA*

EPA has written a guidance document for utility operators, available at [www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html) or by calling EPA at 1-800-426-4791. Also, a fill-in-the-blanks report template is expected to be released by EPA soon.

## *Reporting monitoring results*

Many systems have chosen to use the words "substances," "compounds" or "elements" to describe monitoring results in their reports,

rather than the word "contaminant." You may use any word that you think best describes your monitoring results. "Contaminant" does not have to be used unless it is present in definitions and other sentences that are required by EPA to be in your report.

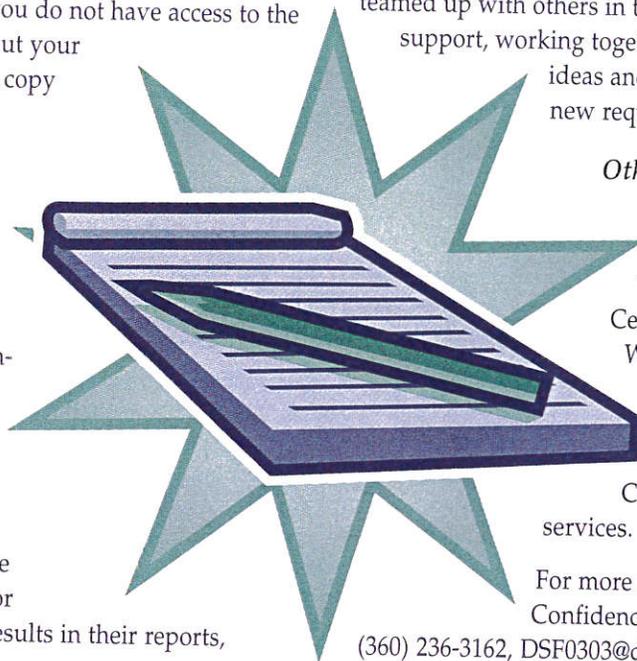
## *Reviewing reports*

Systems are not required to have their reports reviewed by DOH before delivering them to customers. In fact, due to workload constraints, the DOH is not able to review reports in advance even as a voluntary service. Many systems have teamed up with others in their geographic area for this kind of support, working together on their reports as a way to share ideas and compare notes as they carry out this new requirement.

## *Other organizations can help*

The American Water Works Association (800-448-5227), Washington Environmental Training Center (253-288-3370), Evergreen Rural Water of Washington (509-962-6326) and private consulting firms also are developing electronic templates of the report and other Consumer Confidence Report services.

For more information about Consumer Confidence Reports, contact Donna Freier at (360) 236-3162, [DSF0303@doh.wa.gov](mailto:DSF0303@doh.wa.gov).



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## Backflow Prevention Assemblies List Now Available from DOH

The 1999 Department of Health Approved Backflow Prevention Assemblies List is now available from the Division of Drinking Water upon request. Purveyors, certified Backflow Assembly Testers and certified Cross-Connection Control Specialists can request a copy by calling 1-800-521-0323. A mailing list of requesters will be maintained, and those on it will automatically get updates as they are developed over the year.

The Drinking Water Program will not distribute the Approved List through mass mailings this year.

The DOH Approved List is based upon the Approved Backflow Prevention Assemblies List published by the University of Southern California's Foundation for Cross-Connection Control and Hydraulic Research. Because Washington's drinking water regulations require Group A public water systems to use DOH-approved assemblies for backflow protection, USC has granted DOH permission to reproduce its list as a DOH publication and distribute the list to the regulated community. DOH does not have permission to distribute the DOH Approved List at large. Also, the DOH Approved List is not available on disk or on the Drinking Water Web page, due to USC distribution restrictions.

If you have questions regarding the technical content of the DOH Approved List, contact Terri Notestine at 360-236-3133.

## Training and Education Calendar July - Oct. 1999

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
July 14-16	Water Certification Exam Review	Richland	WETRC
July 21	Water Dist. System Maint. & Operations	Ellensburg	ERWOW
July 21-23	Water Certification Exam Review	Everett	WETRC
July 22-24	Cross Connection Specialist Cert. Review	Richland	WETRC
July 23	Chlorination Techniques	Omak	ERWOW
Aug 11	Backflow Assembly Repair/Troubleshooting	Ellensburg	ERWOW
Aug 18	Starting Your Cross-Connection Program	Ellensburg	ERWOW
Aug 25-27	Basic Water Works	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 1-3	Water Certification Exam Review	Tacoma	WETRC
Sept 3	AC Pipe Work Practice Procedures	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 8-10	Cross Connection Specialist Cert. Review	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 14-16	Water Certification Exam Review	Richland	WETRC
Sept 21-23	Water Certification Exam Review	Everett	WETRC
Sept 22-24	Cross Connection Specialist Cert. Review	Richland	WETRC
Sept 25-27	Basic Water Works	Auburn	WETRC
Oct 4-6	Joint Conference on Health	Spokane	Kay DeRoos (206) 362-4728
Oct 12-14	Pump Operation/Maintenance	Auburn	WETRC
Oct 15	AC Pipe Work Practice Procedure	Auburn	WETRC
Oct 20-22	Basic Electrical	Auburn	WETRC
Oct 26	WA State Drinking Water Program Priorities	Lacey	WETRC
Oct 26-28	Chlorination System Operations	Tacoma	WETRC
Oct 28	WA State Drinking Water Program Priorities	Mount Vernon	WETRC

To register call these contacts...

### **ERWOW**

Evergreen Rural Water  
of Washington  
1-509-962-6326

<http://www.erwow.org>

### **WETRC**

Washington Environmental  
Training Center  
1-800-562-0858

[www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/wetrc/](http://www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/wetrc/)

### **Drinking Water Priorities Workshop**

Remember to mark your  
calendars now for the  
1999-2000 Drinking  
Water Priorities  
Workshop, scheduled for  
October 26 in Lacey,  
October 28 in Mount  
Vernon and November 2  
in Wenatchee.

For more information call  
WETRC 800-562-0858.

## New Water System Design Manual and Revised Group A Regulations Completed

The Department of Health has completed a new version of its guide for public water system design. Release of the guide, aptly called the Water System Design Manual, coincides with the recent revision of Group A Water System regulations. The manual provides recommended criteria and approaches that complement the new regulatory requirements. It also provides information about successfully negotiating the process that leads to approval or disapproval of engineering documents. And, of course, much, much more! The new manual replaces the Sizing Guidelines, which DOH has been using since 1983.

The Water System Design Manual is available on the Drinking Water Website under Publications (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>). Call Holly Weber at (360) 236-3140 for a bound copy.

Copies of the revised Group A regulations have been mailed to all Group A water systems, DOH workgroups members, local health jurisdictions and consulting engineers, and to those who submitted comments during regulation development.

The revised WAC is posted to the Code Reviser's website (<http://slc.leg.wa.gov/wacbytitle.htm>). Call Denise Grant at (360) 236-3097 for a bound copy.

# Tap Tips...

## Lead/Copper Monitoring

Many public water systems are not following up with a required second set of samples for lead and/or copper in their water. That is the conclusion the staff at the Department of Health's lead/copper monitoring program has come to. This is serious business! A water system that does not follow up with a second set of samples is subject to enforcement action by DOH.

To avoid the possibility of such action being taken against your system, make sure you have completed both sets of samples. Ideally, you should take a first set of samples (the number you take is based on population served by your system), and follow this six months later by a second set. If the levels of lead or copper detected at 90th percentile of either of these two sample sets exceeds the action level for either substance, you are expected to arrange corrosion control treatment for your system. You aren't expected to continue sampling while you are in the process of setting up treatment.

This initial monitoring process - taking two sets of samples - determines what type of continued routine monitoring your system will be required to do in the future. If the results of the initial samples show low levels of lead and copper, your system could be eligible for reduced monitoring on an accelerated timeline.

If you have questions regarding lead and copper monitoring requirements, contact Chris McCord, at drinking water headquarters, in Olympia, (360) 236-3135; Scott Torpie, at the Eastern Regional Office, in Spokane, (509) 456-3183; Steve Hulsman Northwest Regional Office in Seattle (206) 464-7962; or Belle Fuchs at the Southwest Regional Office in Olympia (360) 586-5179.

# DR. DRIP



Dear Dr. Drip:

I heard a rumor the other day that I want to check out. Is it true that DOH has a new water conservation brochure? If so, do you think they would send me 500 copies, for free, like they did with the old one? I still have all 500 copies of the old brochure - they help hold up a wobbly TV table in the family room - and I know I could find some equally good use for 500 copies of the NEW water conservation brochure. Please advise!

Sincerely, West Knott

Dear West:

*It's as true as your TV table leg.*

*DOH's new brochure, Water Conservation - Guidelines to being Waterwise, is really eight new brochures in one: a handy little cover folder with eight inserts, each with different water conservation tips that the average Jane or Joe can use. They are way better than the old brochures.*

*The inserts cover indoor water conservation (check for leaks, take shorter showers), tell how to make and use a rain gauge, how to take an indoor water audit, and how to make sure you don't overwater your lawn. One insert explains salmon recovery and tells the reader how saving salmon safeguards public health and protects the environment, too. And there's a lot more. Slip one or two - or five, or eight - inserts into a cover folder and voila! you have just tailored your message to a specific audience. The cover folder trumpets the benefits of water conservation and has information on getting more copies of the inserts.*

*DOH will give water systems up to 100 copies of the cover folder and up to 500 copies of each insert free. Water Systems will have to pay for more copies of the folders. If a system wants additional copies of the inserts, DOH will provide them a camera-ready copy or a floppy disk. For more information, or to order the new materials you can call (360) 236-3151. And if you are still having trouble balancing your TV table, we still have lots of copies of draft regulations that we can send you.*

*Yours Truly, Dr. Drip*

# DOH Increases Fees for Service

The Drinking Water Program's fees for various services and for the Operator Certification program have changed. Fee modifications proposed by the program earlier this year will take effect on July 1, 1999 - the beginning of the state fiscal year.

A general increase of 4.18 percent has been added to most fees. The general rate increase was determined by the cap established by Initiative 601, based upon cost of living and increased state population. Fees were changed based upon an analysis of program costs. The changes included a reduction of approximately 50 percent for the areawide waiver renewal fee, and identification of several additional categories of services (such as well field designation) for which the program will charge its standard hourly rate, which rose from \$84 to \$87 an hour.

The Drinking Water Program estimates that these fee changes will result in a net annual revenue reduction of about \$140,000 overall. This is due largely to the reduction of the fee for renewal of the areawide-monitoring waiver.

Prior to adopting the changes, the Department of Health conducted a hearing on April 28 to take public comment on the proposal. There were no public comments made at the hearing and no written comments received prior to it. The proposed modifications were adopted by DOH and filed with the Code Reviser on May 25.

Drinking Water Program Regional Offices can provide a copy of the new fee schedule, and it is also available on the Drinking Water website. <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/pblc.pdf>

## In This Issue:

The following people have contributed to the production of this issue of the Water Tap:

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