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Appropriate planning for expanding community water systems

Planning is the foundation of a successful community water system. Developing and using a water system plan (WSP) will keep you and other system officials informed of the system's operational, infrastructure, and financial needs. Your WSP presents important analysis and documentation decision makers can use to make informed decisions. It also provides a transparent process for system customers to understand and support those decisions.

This factsheet is for water systems developing or updating a WSP. A community water system with 1,000 or more connections, or any size community system that seeks to increase its approved connections or service area, must submit a WSP to us for approval. WSP approvals are valid for six years. At a preplan meeting, we will work with you to determine the timing and scope of the WSP update. A licensed professional engineer must certify the initial WSP and all engineering aspects of a WSP update.

Main objectives of a WSP

1. Summarize water production and usage data and compare it to local land-use data to create a projected water demand forecast.
2. Evaluate system facilities and operations to determine current and future needs and compare the findings to current and projected water demand.
3. Create a capital and other improvement project list, schedule, and funding strategy for near-term projects.

We are committed to making your planning effort worth the time and resources you invest in it. We will consider your system's circumstances and your input when establishing the required content, detail, and expected submittal date for your plan.

Importance of a preplan meeting before submittal

Before you begin developing an initial plan or updating your existing plan, set-up a preplan meeting with our regional office. At the meeting, we will discuss your top needs and priorities for the upcoming plan. Our goal is to work with you to scope a useful plan and a reasonable submittal date that meets everyone's needs and expectations. We will document the outcome and share it with all participants.

System decision makers, operators and engineering consultants should participate in the preplan meeting. If that isn't possible, get their input beforehand so that you are prepared to discuss your planning needs from a system-wide perspective.



What to consider when developing or updating a WSP

- Current and future customer base.
- Current service capacity and future expansion plans.
- Local land use plans.
- Current infrastructure and future capital improvement needs.
- Possible public health threats or significant sanitary survey deficiencies.
- Budget adequacy for current and anticipated future expenses.

If you are developing a WSP for the first time, you can use the relevant information you already have rather than starting from scratch. For instance, do you have documented service policies or a clearly defined operations and maintenance program? A licensed professional engineer must certify your initial WSP and all engineering aspects of a WSP update, but we encourage you to bring as much knowledge and information to the process as possible. The goal is to create a useful and meaningful planning document for your system and you have an important role in that process.

If you are updating your WSP, focus on the major aspects of your system that have changed. Update those sections and any other affected sections. If you confirm that sections of the last plan remain valid, you can simply refer to them in your plan update. If the section involves engineering, your engineer will need to confirm the existing plan is still valid. Comparing the considerations listed above against your existing plan, you and your consulting engineer can determine what sections of your plan update you or other water system staff are suited to lead and what sections your engineer will need to complete.

For more information

Visit the Office of Drinking Water online at

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater.aspx>

View our other planning-related publications at

<https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/dw/publications/publications.cfm?action=pubindex&id=14&type=subject&CFID=6625&CFToken=62925058>

Call the nearest Office of Drinking Water Regional Offices

Eastern Region: Spokane Valley 509- 329-2100

Northwest Region: Kent 253-395-6750

Southwest Region: Tumwater 360-236-3030

