



Department of Health
 2023-25 Regular Budget Session
 Policy Level - ET - Drinking Water Technical Services

Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Health requests funds for federal appropriations for implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act to address stagnant allocations over past years, while Office of Drinking Water (ODW) staffing and other costs rose with cost-of-living increase, salary adjustments, and facility costs. ODW requests to increase the allotment from the operating permit fee account to fund three positions in our engineering and technical services section. This will allow ODW more flexibility to implement new federal regulations and program, respond to emerging contaminants, and provide additional technical support throughout the office.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Staffing						
FTEs	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 03R - 1	\$530	\$514	\$1,044	\$514	\$514	\$1,028
Total Expenditures	\$530	\$514	\$1,044	\$514	\$514	\$1,028

Decision Package Description

Problem:

Federal appropriations for the Public Water System Supervision grant for implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) has been stagnant over past years, but ODW staffing and other costs have increased due to cost-of-living increase, salary adjustments, and facility costs. ODW has not been able to fully fund all FTEs due to limited allotments in fee accounts and the stagnant federal appropriations. ODW also supports staff with set asides from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) capitalization grant, but these set asides have more restrictions on the type of work performed and are targeted to support the capacity development of water systems to be eligible for construction loan funding.

During the last five years, ODW has not filled three vacant positions in the Engineering and Technical Services section of the office. These positions provide additional support to staff implementing the SDWA within Washington. Without filling these positions in our engineering and technical services section ODW does not have the flexibility to properly plan for implementation of new federal regulations and programs, responding to emerging contaminants, and providing additional technical support throughout the office.

In the next three years, ODW expects to implement three new federal regulations: 1) the Revised Lead and Copper Rule; 2) federal rules establishing maximum contaminant levels (MCL) for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS); and 3) revised microbial and disinfection byproducts rules. This team of engineers and technical experts will also allow ODW to quickly respond to emergency events such as the harmful algae bloom along the Columbia River in the summer of 2021 that threatened the drinking water supply for the tri-cities region.

In addition to supporting implementation of new rules and emergency response, this team supports water systems to optimize their treatment processes to enhance public health protection, conducts studies to evaluate treatment efficacy, and conducts research with the support of water utilities on various water quality issues.

Proposal:

During the last five- years, ODW has not filled three vacant positions in the Engineering and Technical Services section of the office. By filling the three vacant positions in the Engineering and Technical Services Section, ODW staff will have additional support in implementing the SDWA within Washington. Funding these positions will allow ODW more flexibility for implementation of new federal regulations and programs, responding to emerging contaminants, and providing additional technical support throughout the office. This proposal requests an increase in allotment from the operating permit fee account to fund these vacant positions

These positions are critical in emergency response, program planning and implementation of new federal rules. Washington State is known to have one of the leading drinking water programs in the nation, our water system design manual is used throughout the country by other states and Indian Health Services. The support of this section allows department staff to remain on the cutting edge and allows ODW to continue to produce useful, well written, and researched guidance to water systems owners, operators, and consultants.

Alternative:

ODW evaluated both continuing to not fund these positions and funding these positions through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) set asides.

These positions allow ODW to continue to be ahead of the curve and be one of the leading drinking water programs in the nation. Failing to fund these positions limits the ability to be prepared for new and emerging issues. ODW will also struggle to implement new federal regulations and will need to shift staff who work directly with utilities and provide in-depth technical assistance to increase water system technical, managerial, and financial capacity to program development and implementation for these new regulations. The office will also have less flexibility to respond to emergencies such as the Columbia River harmful algal bloom last fall which threaten the water supply serving 250,000 people in the quad-city area.

Funding these positions through BIL set asides will limit the scope of work of these positions. The set aside funding is targeted to providing capacity development to water systems to ensure water systems are eligible for DWSRF Funding. Additionally, ODW wishes to use the BIL set aside funds to contract with third party technical assistance providers and technical consultants to support water systems in responding to contamination issues, treatment and infrastructure design, loan application support, and construction management and oversight. Diverting these funds to fund ODW staff positions will reduce the number of water systems ODW can support with these technical assistance contracts.

There is no current legal or administrative mandate for these positions. The positions will support new federal regulation program planning and implementation. Without these positions, other important work will be delayed or postponed to ensure implementation of the recently revised lead and copper rule and the other expected new federal regulations proposed by EPA

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal is to fund positions that were left vacant due to stagnant allotments and federal awards and increased operating costs. These positions are crucial for ODW to stay on the cutting edge of technology, have flexible response to drinking water emergencies and to develop programs and implementation of new federal regulations.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The proposal is for the following positions to support the engineering and technical services team in ODW. Additional staff costs include equipment, travel, training and agency indirect's. These costs will be supported from the current fund balance.

The 03R- Water System Operating Permit Fee Account has a current balance of \$5.4M. Current account annual income is \$3M, and the annual allotment is \$2.8M, plus \$1.2M over the next three-years for a data migration approved last biennium

Workforce Assumptions:

FTE	Job Classification	Salary	Benefits	Startup Costs	FTE Related Costs
1.0	Environmental Engineer 5	\$109,000.00	\$38,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00
1.0	Environmental Engineer 2	\$85,000.00	\$33,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00
1.0	Public Health Advisor 4	\$83,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00
0.7	FISCAL ANALYST 2	\$39,000.00	\$19,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
0.5	HEALTH SERVICES CONSULTANT 1	\$27,000.00	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
4.2		\$343,000.00	\$135,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$24,000.00

Estimated expenditures include salary, benefit, and related costs to assist with administrative workload activities. These activities include policy and legislative relations; information technology; budget and accounting services; human resources; contracts; procurement; risk management, and facilities management.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This proposal relates to the Governors goals by contributing most directly to **Goal 4 Healthy and Safe Communities and Goal 5 Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government.**

This funding is for essential unfunded vacant positions and supports the Dept. of Health's **Transformational Plan Priority I. Health and Wellness**, in that All Washingtonians have the opportunity to attain their full potential of physical, mental, and social health and well-being. This proposal achieves this priority with increased allocation in the operating permit fee account which will allow ODW to fully spend the permit fee account yearly and reduce the surplus in the account. In doing so, ODW will provide utilities with the technical expertise to evaluate new and emerging contaminants, implement new federal regulations, provide guidance and operations support, and allow staff to be up to date on the new treatment technologies, which promotes health and wellness in our communities.

Performance Outcomes:

Increase water system compliance with new federal regulations by providing guidance and training to water systems prior to new rule effective and comply by dates.

Provide guidance and assistance during public drinking water emergencies. Reviews after action report and determine what steps and projects can be conducted to reduce or mitigate public health impacts into the future.

Lead and support new federal regulation program planning and implementation plans, including the revised lead and copper rule.

Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

Additional benefit from this proposal will allow the office to work more closely with populations who have historically been marginalized, identify significant policy issues, and build resilience in small water systems. These technical staff will provide underserved, overburdened communities with technical assistance and guidance to meet the ever changing and evolving federal and state drinking water regulations.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Safe drinking water is vital to all residents of Washington state, regardless of income, access, color or economic structure. Adding the FTEs to serve the communities meets the basic cornerstone values by creating the staff to engage with community partners equitably and to learn and share water system technological innovations, where smaller system operators or managers may not afford to learn without the ODW staff support.

Target Populations or Communities:

All people of the State benefit from this proposal and the technical expertise these positions will provide; however, our staff and the funding focus on Group A, public water systems. These positions are supported by the Group A public water system operating permit fee account.

More than 6.2 million Washington State residents, 85 percent of the state's population, get their drinking water from public water systems. Public water systems are located throughout the State in both urban and rural area; however, rural areas are more likely to not be served by public water systems.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

NA

State Workforce Impacts:

NA

Intergovernmental:

These positions will provide technical assistance and expertise to both internal staff and water systems owned by State agencies, city and county governments along with other quasi-government entities include public utility districts, water and sewer districts, and homeowner associations. It is anticipated all water systems will support this proposal.

Stakeholder Response:

These positions will provide technical assistance and expertise to privately owned, for-profit water systems. It is anticipated all water systems will support this proposal.

State Facilities Impacts:

NA

Changes from Current Law:

NA

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

NA

Reference Documents

[Backup - ODW - Technical staffing DW Assistance 03R - Decision Package.docx](#)

[FINAL - ODW - 03R Technical Staffing Allotment DP 2023 Session_submitted to CBO.xlsm](#)

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Obj. A	\$343	\$340	\$683	\$340	\$340	\$680
Obj. B	\$134	\$133	\$267	\$133	\$133	\$266
Obj. E	\$18	\$18	\$36	\$18	\$18	\$36
Obj. J	\$12	\$0	\$12	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$23	\$23	\$46	\$23	\$23	\$46

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