



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

Pennsylvania's Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Program

The 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act reauthorization requires (under Section 1453) states to develop a Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Program. The SWAP program assesses the drinking water sources serving public water systems for their susceptibility to pollution. This information will be used as a basis for building voluntary, community-based barriers to drinking water contamination. The states are required to assess all sources (including ground and surface water sources) serving public water systems within two years of program approval, with the possibility of an 18 month extension. In Pennsylvania, this represents about 14,000 permanent drinking water sources that will need to be assessed by June 2003.

HOW ARE WATER SOURCES BEING ASSESSED?

A state assessment program is required to:

- (1) Delineate the boundaries of the areas providing source waters for all public water systems; and
- (2) Identify (to the extent practicable) the origins of regulated and certain unregulated contaminants in the delineated area to determine the susceptibility of public water systems to such contaminants.

These assessments are of the raw water quality, not the finished water compliance. Pennsylvania must use all reasonably available hydrogeologic information, water flow, recharge and discharge, and any other information deemed necessary to accurately delineate the source water assessment areas.

Assessments for the larger community water systems supplied primarily by surface water sources will be conducted through contracted services. DEP will conduct assessments for community water systems supplied primarily by groundwater and serving a population of 3,300 or more. The groundwater sources of public water systems serving less than 3,300 will be initially assessed using readily available data from the program's geographic information system (GIS). In the future, these assessments will continually be enhanced through sanitary surveys conducted by water suppliers and DEP.

The most important objective for conducting source water assessments is to support the development of local, voluntary Source Water Protection Programs.

HOW WILL THE SWAP PROGRAM APPLY TO WELLHEAD PROTECTION?

Wellhead protection, required under Section 1428 of the Safe Drinking Water Act, was established to protect public groundwater sources from contamination. Pennsylvania's Wellhead Protection Program forms the cornerstone of the SWAP program. Just like SWAP, wellhead protection involves the delineation of the area contributing water and an inventory of potential

contaminant sources in that area with the ultimate goal of developing a voluntary, community-based drinking water protection program.

A comprehensive local wellhead protection program includes the following: designation of responsibilities and formation of a steering committee; public participation; wellhead protection area delineation; identification of contaminant sources; development of wellhead protection area management approaches; contingency planning; and new water supply source protection. These same elements will be promoted for source water protection of surface water sources.

Communities across Pennsylvania have already developed local wellhead protection programs for their community water supplies.

HOW WILL THE SWAP PROGRAM HELP THE PUBLIC?

A vulnerable drinking water source puts a public water supply and the community at a disadvantage in planning and building future capacity for economic growth. SWAP Programs will provide information that may lead to improvements in raw water quality and may also result in reduced treatment costs. Assessments will also help to continue or to enhance emergency response, improve land use planning and municipal decisions, and prioritize and coordinate actions by federal and state agencies to better protect public health and safety.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Source water assessments will provide communities and water suppliers with information that they will need to make informed decisions on how to best protect their drinking water supplies.

Source water protection grants will be available from DEP for municipalities and water suppliers to develop local source water protection programs. DEP will provide technical support and loans to communities to assist them in developing protection plans. The League of Women Voters, through the Water Resource Education Network, will provide training and mini-grants

for local coalition building to promote local education and dialogue on the issues of source water protection. DEP also supports the Pennsylvania Rural Water Association by providing a groundwater technician to help communities with their Wellhead Protection Program. A workbook and website will be available to guide a municipality, water supplier or group through developing a local source water protection program. In addition, DEP will be developing educational materials to help put source water protection programs into practice.

Since Pennsylvania's SWAP Program is a voluntary, community-based approach, it will be up to each community to put protection programs into place. Community members could volunteer their time to collect source water information, identify potential sources of contaminant or even participate in public education programs.

The assessments will provide communities with the tools that they need to make informed decisions about water consumption and how to protect their drinking water supplies.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORTS

Beginning in 1999, water suppliers must provide annual Consumer Confidence Reports to their customers which include the following information:

- ◆ the drinking water source type, commonly used name and location;
- ◆ availability of the source water assessment and how to obtain it; and
- ◆ a brief summary of the system's susceptibility to potential sources of contamination.

If a water supplier has not received a source water assessment, they are encouraged to include any readily available information about potential sources of contamination in their report. Consumer confidence reports will assist the public in making personal health-based decisions regarding their drinking water consumption.

DISTRIBUTION AND AVAILABILITY OF SOURCE WATER ASSESSMENTS

The source water assessment results will be made available to the public and a summary is to be included in the annual Consumer Confidence Report prepared by each community water system. Copies of the completed

SWAP for community water systems will be provided to the community water systems, the libraries in communities served by the community water systems, local municipalities and planning agencies and the DEP regional offices. A summary of the SWAP with a map will be available on the DEP website and will be provided to the water suppliers for distribution to consumers, local municipalities and emergency management personnel.

For more information on Pennsylvania's Source Water Assessment and Protection Program, call the DEP regional office in your area or contact:

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DEP REGIONAL OFFICES

Southeast Regional Office - 610-832-6059
Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia

Northeast Regional Office - 570-826-2511
Counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming

Southcentral Regional Office - 717-705-4708
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Southwest Regional Office - 412-442-4217
Counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland

Northwest Regional Office - 814-332-6899
Counties: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren

This fact sheet and related environmental information are available electronically via Internet. For more information, visit us through the Pennsylvania homepage at <http://www.state.pa.us> or visit DEP directly at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose directLINK "Drinking Water Publications").



www.GreenWorksChannel.org - A web space dedicated to helping you learn how to protect and improve the environment. The site features the largest collection of environmental videos available on the Internet and is produced by the nonprofit Environmental Fund for Pennsylvania, with financial support from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 800 334-3190.