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Nevada's Integrated Source Water Protection/Wellhead Protection

Nevada assists Public water systems and local communities throughout Nevada to protect their drinking water supplies through implementing a multi-faceted Integrated Source Water Protection Program (ISWPP). It is Nevada's belief that effective source water protection must be developed and administered by the community in conjunction with local water suppliers. A local plan is a long-term commitment on the part of the community to protect its drinking water sources from becoming contaminated or polluted by various land use activities.

ISWPP helps communities develop and implement Community Source Water Protection Plans (CSWPPs). Local CSWPPs are developed through a county-wide planning and coordination approach, which encourages all public water systems within a specific county to work together to examine shared water resources, evaluate community development impacts to water sources, and discuss how to collectively manage potential risks from a broader perspective.

The ISWPP's multi-jurisdictional approach provides opportunities for public water systems ranging from very small taverns and mobile home parks to larger districts and municipalities to pool resources and promote community-wide awareness and implementation of the plan. This ultimately increases opportunities for small public water systems with limited resources and/or capacity to be included under a more comprehensive CSWPP and implementation effort.

The current ISWPP schedule and funding allocations allow every public water system in the State of Nevada an opportunity to participate in the planning process over the 12 to 15-year cycle. In addition, the program plans to provide assistance for up to three counties at a time; approximately two years of technical assistance (including team building, plan development and implementation, and promoting public acceptance of the plan) is dedicated for each county

Currently, 301 of the 592 regulated public water systems in Nevada are covered under a source water or wellhead protection plan. Of those, 276 have significantly implemented some elements of SWP strategies. Seven of Nevada's seventeen counties have a state endorsed countywide plan.

This year, NDEP is continuing to leverage funding and technical assistance from the Nonpoint Source Program (NPS) to assist communities and public water systems within Washoe County to complete the development of a regional Source Water Protection and Watershed Management plan, which meets EPA criteria for both programs and subsequent funding requirements. Washoe County is Nevada's second largest county based on population.

In addition, NDEP is currently coordinating with NRCS on project scoping for various communities with completed CSWPPs and where groundwater quality data (Nitrates) supports project need. NDEP is currently investigating the elements required for a source water assessment for NWQI purposes and comparing the criteria to what is currently required for State endorsement of a CSWPP. This gap analysis will guide our next steps in coordinating with NRCS to determine how to address the data gaps, and leverage funding for source water protection planning and projects among producers and affected public water systems in Nevada.

Vulnerability Assessment and Monitoring Waiver Programs

The Vulnerability Assessment Program is an update to the 2003 Source Water Assessment Program and has its roots in the original vulnerability assessment program, approved by EPA in 1995, which was performed during the initial permitting process of a PWS. Vulnerability assessments include locating sources, identifying potential sources of contaminants within a 3000-foot radius of wells/springs, evaluating source water susceptibility to contamination, and reviewing prior sampling results. The program requires summaries of the assessments to be reported to the public in the annual Consumer Confidence Reports for CWSs. Based on initial assessment of the source water vulnerability determination, a PWS may qualify for chemical monitoring relief (IOC, VOC, and SOC) as approved by EPA in 1995. Eligible PWSs are also required to provide updates to the assessment data and apply for waiver renewal every 3 years.

The 2011 updated BSDW Vulnerability Assessment and Monitoring Waiver programs share information collected under those program efforts with the ISWPP to document Potential Contaminant Sources (PCS) for public water systems. The Vulnerability Assessment Reports (VARs) note PCS and rank them based on their potential to adversely affect a water supply source. Project efforts were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act set-asides and continued with a combination of resources, DWSRF set-aside funding and leveraging technical assistance from the ISWPP/Wellhead Protection staff. BSDW completed updating VARs for 248 eligible community water systems (159 CWSs) and non-transient non-community (89 NTNC) water systems by January 2019. PWSs with complete VARs also qualify for chemical monitoring waivers based on the vulnerability of the source water as determined in the reports. In April 2019, BSDW requested all eligible CWSs to submit waiver renewal applications (updated Form B) by June 30, 2019 in order to be considered for chemical monitoring waivers in calendar year 2020. Ninety-seven percent (97%, or 154/159) of CWSs submitted updated form B. In July 2019, BSDW requested waiver renewal applications from the remaining 89 eligible NTNC systems. These systems must submit updated form B by the end of November in 2019 in order to be considered for chemical monitoring waiver renewal in calendar year 2020. It is anticipated chemical monitoring waiver renewal and updated monitoring assessment plans (MAPs) will be completed for eligible PWSs by the end of calendar year 2019.