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JANUARY 2025

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New Emerging Contaminant Grant Funding

Our Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) has money available for public water systems (PWS) serving small or disadvantaged communities. These funds come through the Environmental Protection Agency's Emerging Contaminants in Small and Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) grant program. This grant helps eligible water systems address the challenges of PFAS and other emerging unregulated contaminants. The grant provides money for:

- **Water quality testing** for eligible emerging contaminants.
- **Short-term solutions** to reduce the contaminant exposure while waiting for resolution.
- **Improvements to water infrastructure** to better prevent future exposure to these harmful substances.

The goal is to reduce health risks from these emerging contaminants. Eligible emerging contaminants are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), manganese, and cyanotoxins.

Eligible Activities

Eligible PWS may receive funding for:

- **Initial and non-compliance** water quality monitoring.
- **Short-term mitigation** such as pitcher filters for individual customers of the system.
- **Long-term infrastructure related remediation projects** to address eligible emerging contaminants, such as:
  - Consolidation.
  - New source development.
  - Treatment.

How to Apply

For PFAS monitoring assistance, please sign up for our free PFAS sampling program. Submit your water system information through our online enrollment form.

We accept short-term mitigation and long-term remediation projects applications on a rolling timeline and review them on a quarterly basis: January, April, July, October. If you have emerging contaminant exceedances, we encourage you to reach out to Samantha.Delmer@doh.wa.gov as soon as possible for more information.

Additional Information

For detailed guidance please see the *Emerging Contaminants in Small and Disadvantaged Communities Grant Guidelines* 331-765 (PDF).

The Municipal Water Law

Growing communities, agriculture, industry, and the need to conserve water for fish are increasing demands on our state's water resources. To help meet these growing needs, the state legislature passed the Municipal Water Supply-Efficiency Requirements Act (PDF), commonly called MWL. The MWL was challenged and later upheld by the Washington State Supreme Court. Visit the MWL Legal Challenges webpage for more information about the lawsuit.

Municipal water suppliers are all Group A community water systems with 15 or more residential connections and Group A non-community systems that provide water for residential uses (such as bathing, cooking, and cleaning) to a non-residential population for 25 or more people for 60 or more days a year.

Summary of the Law

- Provides more certainty and flexibility for water rights held by water systems.
- More closely ties water system planning and engineering approvals by us to water rights administered by the state Department of Ecology (Ecology).
- Improves the ability to plan for future growth.
- Offers greater flexibility to solve public health problems with water right changes and transfers.
- Advances water use efficiency.
- Assures greater reliability of safe drinking water for communities.

How We Implement the MWL

On January 22, 2007, the Water Use Efficiency rule became effective. It helps conserve water for both the environment and future generations by requiring Water Use Efficiency (WUE) from municipal water suppliers.

In August 2024, in agreement with Ecology we updated procedures for coordinating water resource issues related to public water systems that involve both agencies.

Together, we developed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and guide both agencies' responsibilities. The agreement includes planning, engineering, and public health and safety matters relating to water systems and resources.

- On February 14, 2008, our Planning and Engineering Rules 331-010 (PDF) were incorporated into WAC 246-290. We then developed the Joint Review Procedures: Procedures for Planning and Engineering Documents (PDF).
- We also coordinated with Ecology to divide the responsibilities. Read the cover letter (PDF).
- Ecology developed their own Water Resources Program Policy 2030: Municipal Water Law Policy and Interpretive Statement (POL-2030), which explains how they implement the MWL.

We look forward to continuing to provide safe and reliable drinking water, sustainable water resources, and water right management for residents of Washington state.

Get Your Nominations in for Drinking Water Week!

The nomination form is only open until February 17. Visit our Drinking Water Week webpage and read about past winners to get an idea of others' award-winning accomplishments.

Fill out a nomination form today!

Drinking Water Advisory Group (DWAG) March 3 Meeting

We hold all our meetings through Microsoft Teams video. Join the meeting with your computer, laptop, tablet, or phone from wherever you are. **You can find the Teams links and meeting agenda on our DWAG Meeting webpage**. After the meeting we post any handouts or presentations and, within a month, we post the meeting notes.

Do you want to receive advance notice of meetings and their agendas? Join our advisory group email list. Do you have questions about the advisory group or topics you'd like to discuss? Email Brad Burnham with your ideas.

Sign Up for FREE PFAS Testing

We continue offering **FREE** PFAS testing to Group A Community and Non-transient Non-Community water systems. We are funding through September of 2025, which we may extend. With the recent EPA PFAS Rule, **all systems need to complete initial monitoring by April 26, 2027**. Systems with less than 10,000 population need two samples in a 12-month period, five to seven months apart. Systems with over 10,000 population need four samples in a 12-month period, two to four months apart. Samples may be in different years, but must meet the parameters. Our Free PFAS Sampling Program pays for ALL of a system's initial sampling. Funding is limited, so sign up NOW. **Fill out our online PFAS Free Sampling Enrollment Form**.

Include Your Entire Organization in Every Project

The life of a water utility is 99 percent routine operation and maintenance. The other 1 percent comes in the form of emergency response, new or updated planning documents, or constructing new or replacement facilities. Utilizing professional engineers (hired or on staff) to lead planning, design, and construction activities is required in most situations. Many decision makers may see the professional engineer requirement and may not realize the importance of including their entire organization in every project.

Excluding other utility representatives is not only detrimental to accomplishing the goals of the project, it may also harm the utility as a whole by creating resentment and cynicism. It's the responsibility of leaders to recognize the need for a holistic approach and create a unified vision to encourage trust, create conversation, and break the project out of the "engineering only" mentality. Many involved may not feel comfortable giving input or participating in a project. It's important that everyone is aware of the big-picture view and how they can make an impact individually. When everyone is encouraged to collaborate, you avoid the *"it's not my job"* attitude and create a better engineering project and long-term success. It's also important to establish benchmarks, schedule check-ins with interested parties, and ensure accountability to assigned tasks.

Interested Parties

Decision Makers. Point of contact for the utility. Usually responsible for funding, hiring, and overall scope of projects. Can delegate leadership of projects to engineer; but must be involved and create culture of collaboration.

Engineer. Required by law to prepare Water System Plans and Project Reports. Must have the appropriate knowledge, experience, and time for the project. Should communicate thoroughly and in a timely manner to gain water system knowledge, vet proposed ideas, and keep all parties informed of progress.

Operator. Has intimate knowledge of existing equipment and facilities. Usually, a great resource to identify challenges and unique circumstances that may limit a design. Should inform design engineer of what technologies they prefer, and designs should reflect the experience level of the operators.

Contractors. Can be a great resource for equipment and supply availability and new technologies. Often has a good understanding of code and land development limitations. Can provide a practical evaluation of all designs.

Technical Assistance Provider. Often know "what works" for similar problems in neighboring systems. Can identify possible training opportunities for operators being asked to do more than they are comfortable with. Can help with funding options.

Regulators. Know what is allowed in regulations. Can provide resources and suggestions. The ultimate approving authority for projects. Offers funding opportunities.

Customers. Understanding the value of water is essential to a smooth project. Informing customers of coming projects, and allowing input, is a great way to gain trust and support. Include public outreach and communication aspects with each project and plan.

Knowledge, collaboration, creativity, and confidence are keys to a successful project. Good leadership ensures each project represents the entire utility and includes training/education and encourages constructive feedback from everyone. Getting collaboration from everyone is not an easy task; however, it's the only way to have useful plans, avoid change orders, or project resubmittals. Collaboration also facilitates a unified vision and establishes a clear purpose and a common goal. There is no clearer path to success than having everyone pushing a project in the same direction.

Available Resources

- *How to Hire an Engineer. A Guide for Small Public Water Systems* 331-044 (PDF).
- *Certified Operator Hiring Guide* 331-655 (PDF).
- *Owning and Managing a Group A Water System* 331-084 (PDF).
- Free Technical Assistance Flyer (PDF).
- Water System Marketing Resources webpage.

Notice: WQMS Offline

We took the Water Quality Monitoring Schedule (WQMS) offline for maintenance. We need to assure that monitoring requirements are calculated accurately and display properly.

If your water system has any type of quarterly monitoring, it will likely continue for the first quarter of 2025. We will notify everyone as soon as the 2025 WQMS is available.

Valuing All Water: Water Reuse and Resource Recovery

Reclaimed water is domestic wastewater that is treated and put to beneficial use where potable water isn't needed. Advances in water purification and disinfection technology means it is possible to treat water to any desirable level—fit for its purpose. Water reuse:

- Is a smart, safe, and sustainable solution.
- Diversifies the water portfolio, reducing reliance on overburdened traditional sources like rivers, reservoirs, and aquifers—critical for areas facing water scarcity, climate change impacts, or population growth.
- Reduces the amount of polluted wastewater discharged onto land, or into lakes, rivers, and the Puget Sound, including nutrients.
- Provides a drought-proof, reliable, resilient, and local supply of a finite, critical natural resource that helps save drinking water for drinking.

As Washington counties and cities are preparing for population growth and for climate impacts, reclaimed water—and resource recovery—should be a fundamental part of managing wastewater, integrated across the water cycle and into community planning. This will help create safe, local, and sustainable water supplies as well as enable multi-benefit projects.

Coordinating and Integrating Reclaimed Water

In 2007 the legislature stated, "[U]se of reclaimed water constitutes the development of new basic water supplies needed for future generations and local and regional water management planning should consider coordination of infrastructure, development, storage, water reclamation and reuse, and source exchange as strategies to meet water demands associated with population growth and impacts of global warming."

To further the use of and ensure integrated planning for reclaimed water, the statute requires regional water supply plans, or any other potable water supply plans prepared by multiple water purveyors, to consider the proposed use of the reclaimed water as they are developed or updated.

When reclaimed water is available or is proposed for use under a water supply plan or a wastewater plan, "these plans must be coordinated to ensure opportunities for reclaimed water are evaluated."

Additionally, regional water supply planning efforts must include the owners of wastewater treatment facilities that produce—or propose to produce—reclaimed water for use within the planning area.*

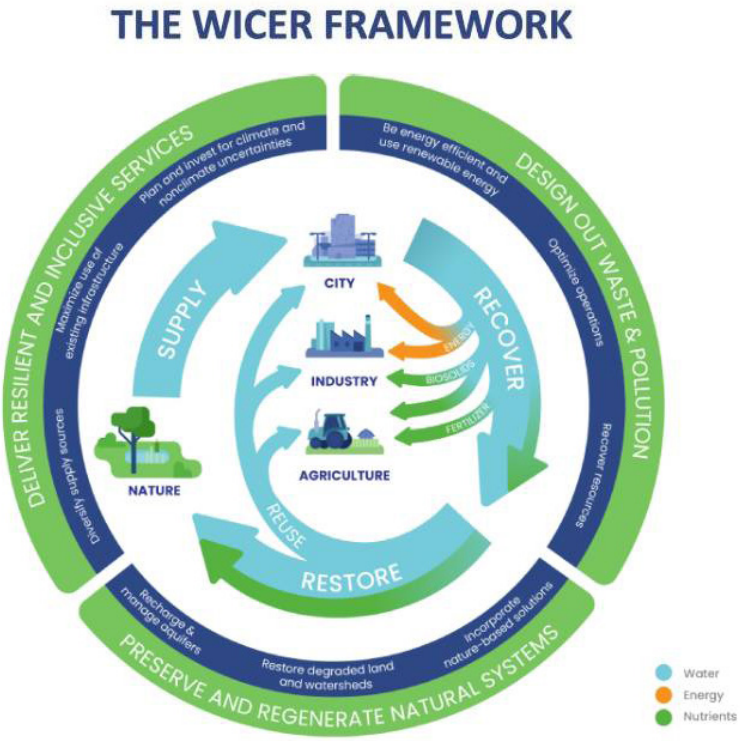
A 2008 Reclaimed Water report to the legislature suggested that "to avoid undue increases in rates, maximum efficiencies could be sought through expanding the boundaries of what is traditionally considered water resources to include all other sectors, such as energy, food, economic and community development, people and goods movement, exchange of goods and services, ecosystem restoration, recreation, culture, health, and education."

This notion, perhaps new and innovative in 2008, is now essential to a sustainable, healthy future. Over the years, you have likely heard some of the nomenclature—integrated water resource management, one water, water in a circular economy, and symbiosis.

These approaches are all based on the underlying understanding that the linear approach of extraction and disposal of finite resources, like water, is straining our capacity to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of us. One where everyone has access to safe drinking water—and sanitation—a fundamental human right.

Getting out of our silos and integrating and coordinating across the water cycle and sector is the way towards a sustainable management of our water resources.

Contact Jocelyn W. Jones, jocelyn.jones@doh.wa.gov for more information.



Current requirements for coordinated planning and consideration of water reuse, include, but may not be limited to: WAC 246-290-100 Water system plan; RCW 90.46.120 Use of water from wastewater treatment facility—Consideration in regional water supply plan or potable water supply plans—Consideration in reviewing provisions for water supplies for short plat, short subdivision, or subdivision—Report to the legislature; RCW 43.20.230 State board of health statute for Water resource planning—Procedures, criteria, technical assistance; RCW 90.48.112 Water pollution control. Plan evaluation—Consideration of reclaimed water; 90.54.020 General declaration of fundamentals for utilization and management of waters of the state; RCW 90.54.180 Water use efficiency and conservation programs and practices.

Year in Review: ODW Compliance

2024 was a busy year for our compliance and enforcement program staff. Between the regional offices and headquarters program staff, we issued a total of 177 formal enforcement documents. Of these 177 enforcement documents, 102 water system have returned to compliance within the 2024 calendar year.

Aside from formal enforcement documents, compliance staff also entered and tracked 46 directives, 80 corrective action plans, and issued 2 civil penalty orders, mostly for the sanitary survey and operator certification programs.

While hard numbers are interesting, they don't necessarily show the human side of the work we do or the successes we have. Oftentimes our greatest compliance challenges and successes occur over the span of years and may not be apparent by looking at the data. Each of the regional offices and headquarters programs shared the following compliance successes for 2024.

Eastern Regional Office

Hunters Water District has struggled with a failing arsenic treatment plant for years. In early 2024, they entered into receivership with Stevens County. This allowed the system to access funds to complete the necessary treatment plant upgrades and hire an appropriately certified treatment plant operator. While the project is not yet complete, they are on track to complete the necessary upgrades in 2025. This would not have been possible without the collaboration of our staff and our local county partners.

Northwest Regional Office

We continue working in partnership with the systems, one water system and one problem at a time. Ongoing compliance issues in the regions include arsenic and disinfection byproducts MCL exceedances, sanitary survey deficiency follow-up, completion of corrosion control steps after copper action level exceedances, surface water treatment plant improvements, and reoccurring bacterial contamination requiring systems to install disinfection.

Southwest Regional Office

Bullman Beach is a remote, rural community that has struggled to provide adequate surface water treatment for almost twenty years. Bullman Beach is now in receivership with Clallam County, and this year we issued an updated Formal Compliance Agreement (AFC) to put the system back in compliance with updated deadlines. The design engineer submitted a filtration project that is currently under review. We are hopeful that this system is on the path to improved water quality, and appreciative of the efforts of our partners.

Operator Certification

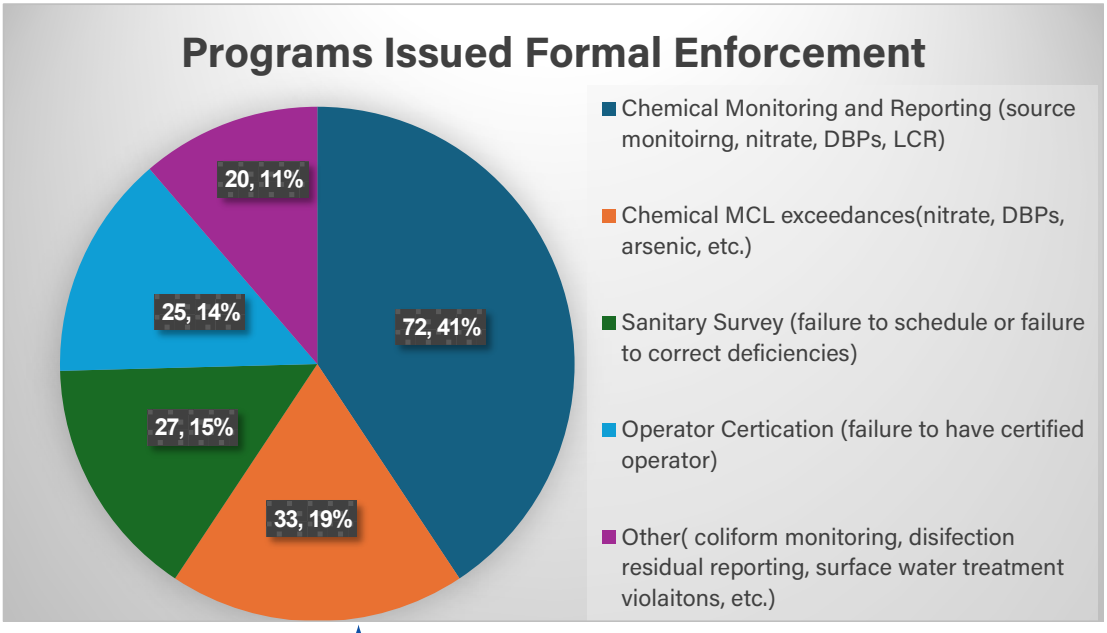
In 2024 the Operator Certification (OpCert) program worked hard to build a strong foundation with improved communication between both internal and external partners. Two new positions were added to the team. These individuals are now assisting the surface water and cross connection teams as well as conducting sanitary surveys across the regions. OpCert program members have also provided technical assistance to individuals studying for their certified operator exam and established a new role in assisting with workforce development. Having qualified certified operators with access to our technical assistance improves compliance and enforcement outcomes for water systems. It takes a team to succeed and the OpCert team has demonstrated how programs within our office help and support each other.

Statewide Compliance Coordinator

We meet quarterly with EPA to discuss water systems who have a score higher than eleven (11) on their Enforcement Targeting Tool (ETT). Through informal and formal enforcement we reduced the number of water systems with scores greater than 11 from 87 systems in April 2024 to 34 in October 2024.

Compliance and Enforcement Team

The compliance and enforcement team completed a revision of our internal guidance on the compliance process. The team continues to work through completing LEAN process mapping which includes updating our current formal enforcement documents to make them more reader and user friendly.



Year in Review: Sanitary Surveys

Another year of Washington State sanitary surveys is behind us! The first sanitary survey completed in 2024 was Mary's Corner Medical Clinic. The sanitary survey was conducted by Lewis County Public Health. Their letter went out to the public water system on February 2, 2024. Way to go Lewis County Public Health! The 2025 sanitary survey list is out and assigned. The clock stops after the survey is complete, submitted, and sent out to the public water system. Who will be the first water system surveyed in 2025?

On May 14-15, 2024, the Sanitary Survey Team hosted an in-person training event at Central Washington University. The training was given in two tracks:

- Basic sanitary surveys introductory track.
- Advanced track for experienced surveyors.

Fifty-eight attended Track 1, and 54 attended Track 2. In total, 68 Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) partners, 9 Technical Assistance providers, and 38 ODW staff attended. This training event was the first in-person training opportunity since the COVID restrictions on gathering in large groups. The training was needed for new and experienced surveyors alike. Everyone enjoyed spending time together in real-life.

The 2024 sanitary survey season was busy. Denise Miles (Southwest region), Bethany Brunny (Northwest region), and Mark Steward (Eastern region) all did excellent working with internal staff, LHJs, and public water systems to ensure that community members have safe and reliable drinking water.

2024 Statewide Sanitary Survey Numbers

	DOH	TPS*	Total
Surveys Completed	430 (92.2%)	449 (92.8%)	879 (94.4%)
Reports Pending	17	35	52
Total	**447**	**484**	**931**

**TPS: Third-Party Surveyor.*

There's a lot happening behind the scenes with our statewide Sanitary Survey program. While our team is busy managing day-to-day operations, they're also working on several important updates and projects. In addition to in-person training, the team is updating the *Sanitary Survey Field Guide* (331-486) and other key publications. They also gave several presentations about sanitary surveys, sharing their knowledge and best practices.

In an effort to streamline operations, they're diligently migrating both current and historic program information from Microsoft File Explorer to a dedicated SharePoint page and Teams channel. Stay tuned for more updates as they continue to improve the Sanitary Survey program!

During this statewide data management effort, Debbie Phillips, with our Southwest office, has been the glue holding the sanitary survey team together! Thank you, Debbie, for helping the team across the finish line!

In fall 2024, we were instructed to reduce spending on non-essential services. Like many other state agencies, we're doing our best to responsibly steward our fiscal resources. Sanitary surveys are an essential service and they are not affected by budget restrictions, along with emergency response, water quality monitoring, and other core work. However, future in-person training events will be restricted.

Speaking of training, Arnica Briody, Operations Advisor, is diligently working on completing online Sanitary Survey Training Modules. We will make this remote training accessible to all LHJ staff and third-party sanitary surveyors through a SharePoint Hub page. We expect to launch the page in early 2025. Way to go Arnica!

The Sanitary Survey program team would like to thank internal staff and our LHJ partners who contributed so much to the 2024 sanitary survey season. Ensuring safe and reliable drinking water is a team effort, and we depend on each of you! Have a happy and safe 2025 sanitary survey season!

Please share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested. Sign up for future issues.

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