



2019-21 Biennium Budget Decision Package

Agency: 303 - Department of Health
Decision Package Code-Title: 1N - Monitor Group B Water Systems
Budget Session: 2019-21 Regular
Budget Level: Policy Level
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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Health requests funding to work with local public health to ensure the approximately 13,400 Group B public water systems comply with statewide rules and are providing safe and reliable drinking water.

Fiscal Summary

Dollars in Thousands

Operating Expenditures	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Fund 001 - 1	\$506	\$506	\$506	\$506
Total Expenditures	\$506	\$506	\$506	\$506
Biennial Totals		\$1,012		\$1,012
Object of Expenditure	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Obj. E	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$6
Obj. N	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

Package Description

At present, 13,400 Group B water systems provide drinking water to small businesses and communities across the state. These small systems (fewer than 15 connections and fewer than 25 people) impact rural economic development where larger public utilities do not provide service. These systems are primarily regulated by Local Health Jurisdictions; however, limited local funding has resulted in limited implementation of these programs. In 2014, revisions were made to Group B regulations making it more critical for LHJs to implement a Group B program.

The Department of Health (DOH) shares regulatory responsibility of Group B systems with LHJs. DOH reviews Group B water system plans unless an LHJ has the authority to review them by adopting their own

regulations or as delegated to them through a Joint Plan of Responsibility (JPR) with DOH. The amount of LHJ Group B water system involvement varies from LHJ to LHJ:

- Thirteen LHJs have no involvement, including two of the state's largest LHJs (Seattle-King and Spokane County Health Departments). The only oversight to their Group B water systems is the review by DOH of new plans. Once new plans are approved, Group B water systems are not subject to any regulation, including the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Of concern is that almost all of the Group B water systems were constructed before more robust design standards were put in place. These water systems will likely be operational for many decades, and in that time will experience facility failures that threaten water quality, and health. See more, below, under the Group B project report.
- Eight LHJs have the authority to review new Group B water system plans delegated to them through a JPR with DOH.
- Fourteen LHJs have a JPR with DOH and have also adopted a local ordinance, which often includes periodic inspection. Local ordinances provide open lines of communication, technical assistance, and networking among small systems, and can follow up on the local issues. This is the best level of service and reduces Group B systems' exposure to risks. LHJs also have the flexibility, granted under state law, to approve new water systems that the state cannot. This provides citizens with greater opportunity.

This proposal would continue one-time funding received by DOH in the 2017-19 biennium to help Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) establish and maintain comprehensive Group B programs. For most LHJs, funding is vital for them to maintain local capacity to ensure safe and reliable drinking water for Group B systems in their jurisdictions. Ultimately the funding for the LHJs will help defray the cost of program implementation to start and maintain a drinking water program. This includes developing and adopting rules, policies and procedures. It will also help with technical assistance and training for staff and utilities, and assist with other program related costs.

DOH has had funding in the past to offer local support as a pilot to assist LHJs to develop local ordinances and increase their involvement in Group B water system monitoring. There has been great success, as evidenced by the involvement listed above. However, also listed above, is the opportunity to see more LHJ involvement in Group B water systems. Funding this proposal would reduce the health risks associated with the lack of monitoring these systems. DOH's *Group B Project Report: Safe Drinking Water for Small Communities* (November 2003) summarized the work of 31 LHJs over a two-year period to assess the state of Washington's Group B public water systems (3,230 systems), and found:

- Lack of properly constructed and screened well vents (53%)
- Inadequate water quality monitoring (45%)
- Biological and chemical contaminants located within 100 ft. of source (31%)

- Lack of sampling taps at the wellhead (30%)
- Open storage reservoirs (Approx. 26% of systems have atmospheric storage reservoirs- 49% had unprotected openings.)
- Lack of sealed well caps (21%)

And other unsafe conditions:

- Switching from a groundwater source to a highly vulnerable surface water (lakes, etc.) source without approvals
- Shallow dug wells
- Surface water from creeks
- Poorly developed or unprotected springs which were often unfiltered and had no disinfection
- Unapproved sources / treatment systems in place
- Old inactive sources that continue to be connected to systems
- Absentee water system owners – no one in responsible charge of the water system
- Lack of knowledge and experience of water purveyors.
- Evidence of vandalism and a general lack of security
- Hazardous conditions in pump houses such as bare electrical wires, blocked access to water system components, and rodent infestations
- Known or obvious risk of wellhead contamination from flooding

A 2007 analysis of the department's Group B program estimated that it would cost DOH as much as \$16 million per year to fully implement a Group B program consisting of monitoring oversight, technical assistance, inspections, compliance, and maintaining system inventory information. This decision package is a very economical alternative, and has a proven track record of success.

As a possible alternative, DOH engaged with local governments to explore potential fees to cover the costs necessary to provide this same level of support, but given the economic situations in the rural areas, this approach was not considered feasible. Neither the State DOH nor LHJs have sufficient funding to redirect to this activity without negatively impacting other priority public health work.

Without this funding, significant deficiencies in a majority of the Group B public water systems would continue. In addition, with newly identified contaminants in ground water on the rise, such as Per-and

Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), LHJ's will continue to struggle providing technical assistance and oversight of these small rural water systems, potentially impacting health and human safety in these areas.

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Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

Current funding is temporary for this biennium, received in the 2018 Supplemental as a proviso.

FY2016 – 0

FY2017 – 0

FY2018 – 100,000

FY2019 – 360,000

FY2020 – 506,000 (projection)

FY2021 – 506,000 (projection)

FY2022 – 506,000 (projection)

FY2023 – 506,000 (projection)

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

DOH is requesting \$506,000 in FY 2020 and ongoing for LHJs to implement local Group B water system ordinances and regulations.

These funds would be passed through as grants to LHJs. The grant award amounts will depend on the demand and the available funds at the time of request. The amount will also depend on the need and goal of the participating LHJ. The following grant award limits have been identified:

- LHJ implementing and administering a local ordinance: \$20,000 per year
- LHJ implementing and administering a “full” Joint Plan of Responsibility (JPR): \$10,000 per year
- LHJ implementing and administering a “partial” JPR: \$5,000 per year

Workforce Assumptions:

These funds would be passed through as grants to LHJs. There are no FTE associated with this request.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

This request is aligned with the Governor’s Results Washington:

Goal 4: Healthy and Safe Communities

This request falls into the DOH Agency Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Protect everyone in Washington from communicable diseases and other health threats.

Objective 3: Ensure the safety of our environment as it impacts human health.

Goal 2: Prevent illness and injury and promote ongoing wellness across the lifespan for everyone in Washington.

Objective 6: Protect people from violence, injuries and illness in their homes, neighborhoods and communities.

Foundational Public Health Services element EPH -3. Conduct environmental public health investigations, inspections, sampling, laboratory analysis, and oversight to protect food, recreational water, drinking water, and liquid and solid waste systems in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Performance outcomes:

There are no current tracked measures in Results Washington or in OFM’s Performance Management System. However, DOH will track the initial program success by the number of LHJs that have adopted a local ordinance or increased their level of participation in the Group B program. Ongoing performance indicators will be developed by DOH in consultation with LHJs.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

The proposed funding is passed on to county government to provide greater support for communities around safe and reliable drinking water. It will help Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) establish comprehensive Group B programs by subsidizing the startup costs. The investment will allow local government to efficiently oversee small public water system operations and improve compliance within their jurisdiction, promoting healthier communities than would otherwise be possible. This oversight and expertise goes beyond Group B water systems. Established programs also better support decisions around individual wells and supports technically proficient emergency capacity that is locally situated for all size water systems.

Stakeholder response:

Public and Private Satellite Management Agencies - support

Drinking water consulting engineers that design Group B water systems - support

Land owners and developers - support

Mobile Home Park Owner Associations - support

Legal or administrative mandates:

None.

Changes from current law:

None.

State workforce impacts:

None.

State facilities impacts:

None.

Puget Sound recovery:

None.

Agency Questions

Did you include cost models and backup assumptions?

There is no FNCal since this is passed through to LHJs.

Reference Documents

- 1N Monitor Group B Water Systems Attchmt.pdf

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