

USEPA publishes proposed water conservation guidelines

Background

The 1996 Amendments of the Safe Drinking Water Act require that no later than two years after the enactment (August 6, 1998) the Administrator of USEPA shall publish guidelines for water conservation plans serving for all community water systems. These guidelines will take into consideration water availability and climate.

The guidelines are required to address three categories of systems based on population serving 25-3300, 3301-10,000, and 10,001 and larger.

Also within one year after publication of the guidelines, a primacy state may require a public water system seeking a loan or grant to submit a water conservation plan consistent with these guidelines.

States are not required to adopt the guidelines or to use them in conjunction with their state revolving fund (SRF) programs. SRF funds generally are not considered to be available for conservation planning by water utilities except to the extent that conservation plans play a role in the facility plan for the project that is based on public health, compliance or affordability criteria.

basic measure of universal metering in their conservation plans.

Other basic measures that USEPA is considering are:

- water accounting and loss control,
- costing and pricing, and
- information and education.

It appears that these basic measures are those that are universally accepted by water suppliers as basic conservation measures.

The guidelines suggest a building block approach from the basic guidelines to the more advanced guidelines for the larger water systems.

The guidelines also include one-page worksheets that can be used to help prepare a system profile and to identify climate, water availability, and other conditions affecting conservation planning.

The guidelines suggest that states consider monitoring water system conservation plans, reporting by water systems on their progress in meeting conservation goals, and routinely requiring systems to update their conservation plans. ■

Features

The guidelines are designed for use in infrastructure planning and funding through the SRF and similar federal or state programs.

USEPA is considering looking at the universe of water systems as those that need basic guidelines, intermediate guidelines, and advanced guidelines.

Within each of these categories, there are basic measures that systems should consider. For example, small systems (25-10,000) fall under the basic guideline category and for the

Comment

The proposed guidelines are very complex and if states adopt them in their present form, many systems will need extensive technical assistance to prepare the conservation plans. When these guidelines are published for review and comment, water systems are urged to participate.

The Next Steps

- USEPA will formally propose these guidelines in the near future and request public comments.
- Comments will be reviewed and final guidelines will be published in August 1998.
- States may adopt the guidelines and require systems to develop conservation plans.

