



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
WATER

Mr. Gregg Grunenfelder
Chairman, National Drinking Water Advisory Council
Assistant Secretary
Division of Environmental Health
Washington State Department of Health
P.O. Box 47820
Olympia, WA 98504-7820

Dear Mr. ^{Gregg}Grunenfelder:

Thank you for your letter of June 24, 2008, on behalf of the National Drinking Water Council to Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), regarding the stewardship of America's water resources. The Administrator has forwarded your letter to me for response. I am pleased to receive the Council's recommendations and to have this opportunity to discuss pertinent efforts in the Office of Water.

In response to the Council's first recommendation, I would like to emphasize that EPA is firm in its commitment to source water protection as a means to strengthen public health protection while potentially lowering the cost of drinking water treatment for communities. Source water protection's importance is heightened by concerns about the impacts of climate change and other factors such as a growing population and the emergence of new contaminants. EPA's Office of Water has been a part of the Source Water Collaborative, a group of 20 national organizations united to protect America's drinking water at the source, since its inception in 2006. We have more recently initiated a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to engage Future Farmers of America in protecting drinking water sources and watersheds in agricultural communities. We are also working, through nationally competed grants, to align source water protection and land use policies and requirements; and to provide assistance to small and/or rural communities to develop source water and wellhead protection plans with a focus on preventing wastewater contamination.

With respect to the Council's second point, I agree that it will be critical to maintain safe and reliable supplies of drinking water as all of us move forward to address climate change. As recognized in EPA's March 2008 draft *National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change*, we need to define specific response actions that are based on sound scientific information. The Office of Water is working to ensure that EPA's Office of Research and Development includes as part of its research agenda the specific issues cited by the Council – i.e., impacts of geologic sequestration of carbon on

drinking water supplies (with research currently underway) and biofuels production impacts on water quality and quantity.

I appreciate the timeliness of the Council's recommendation regarding the need for enhanced coordination, collaboration and research related to the development of alternative water supplies. Communities, particularly in water-stressed areas, are increasingly considering a variety of possible approaches -- including conservation and efficiency measures, which I strongly support -- to balance water supply and demand. Additional approaches such as storage of water underground or the use of desalination technology may be needed in some places, potentially raising issues that fall within the purview of the Safe Drinking Water Act's Underground Injection Control (UIC) program. We will give careful consideration to your recommendations as we work to finalize and implement the *National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change*

The Council's final point about the importance of enhanced federal interagency collaboration on water resource issues is well taken. I also would note that EPA is committed to working cooperatively with our state partners as well as with local governments, Tribes and other organizations to address the challenges that the water sector is facing today and in the future. I understand, for example, that the Council was briefed on the results of our ongoing efforts to support the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators in developing a better understanding of water conservation and water resource management activities and needs.

In response to the Council's request for additional discussion on the details of EPA's proposed UIC program regulations for geologic sequestration of carbon dioxide, the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) will schedule a meeting of the Council by conference call during the public comment period on the proposal. OGWDW looks forward to hearing more from you at that time.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further suggestions or questions, please contact me or Cynthia Dougherty, Director of EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, at (202) 564-3750.

Thanks

Sincerely,



Benjamin H. Grumbles
Assistant Administrator

cc: Veronica Blette, DFO, NDWAC