



WaterTalk

Alaska

Idaho

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Washington

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10 Bulletin - EPA 910/9-92-043

February 2004



Celebrating National Drinking Water Week: The Wonder of Water

This issue of *WaterTalk* looks ahead to **National Drinking Water Week** to be observed by EPA, states, and the water industry from May 2–8, 2004. This year's theme is ***The Wonder of Water***.

National Drinking Water Week will include commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act which was signed into law on December 16, 1974. The annual campaign is led by the American Water Works Association in partnership with many organizations, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Work is already underway to get ready for this year's effort, and many resources will be available for municipalities, educators and citizens to help raise awareness about drinking water issues.

In anticipation of Drinking Water Week, this issue of *WaterTalk* features many articles and resources related to drinking water and water efficiency issues.

For details about this year's campaign, and for additional resources or ideas for getting involved, stay tuned to the web site at www.awwa.org.

In This Issue...



EPA News to update you on agency activities, pages 1–3.



Tools to clue you in on resources, publications, opportunities, and services, pages 4–7.



WaterWords to share stories from communities around the Greater Northwest, page 9.



Spotlight to showcase success stories and environmental stars, pages 8, 10.



Ecosystem to provide news that goes beyond water topics, pages 10–11.

EPA and Army Corps Issue Wetlands Decision

EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have announced that they would not issue a new rule on federal regulatory jurisdiction over isolated wetlands.

In 2001, the Supreme Court made a decision in the case of *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (commonly referred to as "**SWANCC**"). The decision overturned the Corps' assertion of federal jurisdiction over certain isolated wetlands where the assertion of jurisdiction was based solely on the presence of migratory birds.

EPA and the Corps responded by issuing revised guidance to their field offices. At the same time, the Agencies reaffirmed federal authority over the vast majority of America's wetlands.

Public comments were solicited to determine if more regulatory clarification was needed. Based on those comments, EPA and the Corps have decided to preserve the federal government's authority to protect our wetlands. The agencies will continue to monitor implementation of this program to ensure its effectiveness.

Thirty programs currently exist to protect and restore millions of acres of our Nation's wetlands. These include the Food Security Act's "Swampbuster" requirements and the Wetlands Reserve Program, both under the authority of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

EPA programs include its "Five-Star Restoration" grant program (*see later article on page 5*), the EPA wetlands grants programs and the National Estuary Program.

Other federal programs include: the Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners in Wildlife" program, the National Marine Fisheries Service's Coastal Wetlands Restoration Program and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, composed of the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of EPA, and Members of Congress.

For details, visit the web site at www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/swanccnav.html.

To contact EPA's Wetlands Helpline, call 1-800-832-7828.

EPA Effluent Guidelines Plan Out for Comment

EPA published its preliminary **Effluent Guidelines Plan** for 2004/2005 in the *Federal Register* on December 31. The plan is open for public comments until **February 17**.

Effluent guidelines are national regulations designed to improve water quality by controlling discharges from industrial sources. EPA writes effluent guidelines for all types of industrial discharges, such as manufacturing, agricultural and service industries. EPA has already issued effluent guidelines for 55 industries. As required by the Clean Water Act, EPA publishes an Effluent Guidelines Plan every other year.

This preliminary plan:

- describes the status of EPA's planning for the effluent guidelines program,
- presents the results of EPA's annual review of the effluent guidelines it has already promulgated for industrial categories,
- identifies industrial categories that EPA expects to investigate further for the possible development or revision of effluent limitations guidelines.

You can view or download the complete text of the *Federal Register* notice and major supporting documents on the Internet at www.epa.gov/guide/plan.html.

Help EPA Explore Water Efficiency Issues

EPA is exploring activities and programs the Agency can undertake to promote water-efficient products to consumers. More widespread use of water-efficient products would not only conserve water supplies, it also would reduce energy use and help maintain aquatic ecosystems.

EPA invites you to **attend a meeting** to help determine the best and most cost-effective way of saving water nationwide. Meetings are being held across the country.

In Region 10, a meeting soon will be scheduled for **mid-March in Seattle, WA**. This meeting will focus on residential, commercial and institutional products.

Attendees can provide input on program concepts, existing programs, potential pitfalls, and possible directions for this future program.

To get the final date and location or for general information on this initiative, see EPA's Water Efficiency Web Page at www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/index.htm.

Check Out Water Efficiency Website

You're invited to check out **EPA's Water-Efficiency Program** web site. Efficient water use helps to reduce the need for costly water supply and wastewater treatment facilities, helps maintain stream flows and healthy aquatic habitats, and reduces the energy used to pump, heat and treat water.

A broad spectrum of stakeholders, from homeowners to state governments, can find information here that can help them become more water-efficient citizens.

The web site includes information on EPA's new initiative to promote water-efficient products in the marketplace, the Water Efficient Products Market Enhancement Program.

It also offers documents on using water wisely in the home, water-efficient landscaping, industry conservation, and many other topics. Some materials are available in Spanish.

Visit the site at www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/.



Security Seminar for Small Utilities, Boise, Feb 23-24

A free seminar will be held in Boise, Idaho, for personnel responsible for developing security plans and procedures for utilities serving fewer than 50,000 people. By the end of the hands-on class, attendees will have developed an action plan that may be immediately implemented at their utility. The American Water Works Association offers this seminar at no cost, thanks to special funding from EPA. Limit: two representatives per utility. The seminar will take place February 23-24. To register or for more information, go to www.awwa.org/education/seminars/.

Water on Tap: What You Need to Know

EPA has released **Water on Tap: What You Need to Know**, an updated report which provides the general public with practical information about drinking water. It is written in plain language and is in great demand by students, teachers, concerned citizens, water professionals, and anyone who is interested in drinking water issues. For a copy, call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

Drinking Water Booklet Guides Small Systems

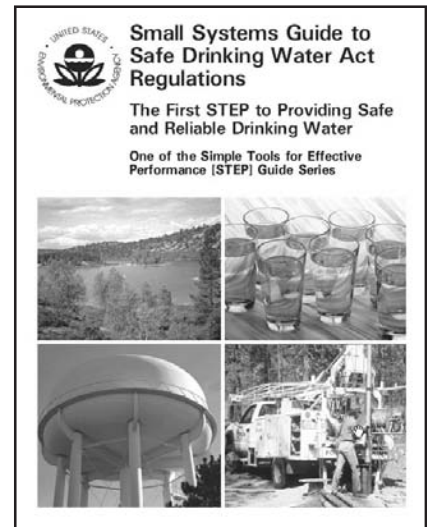
EPA recently published a booklet called **Small Systems Guide to Safe Drinking Water Act Regulations – The First STEP to Providing Safe and Reliable Drinking Water.**

The booklet is one of the *Simple Tools for Effective Performance (STEP) Guide Series*. It was produced to serve as a resource for small drinking water systems and others working with small systems.

The guide provides general information about the Safe Drinking Water Act regulations. It covers how the regulations relate to each other, and how drinking water regulations fit into the multi-barrier approach to drinking water protection.

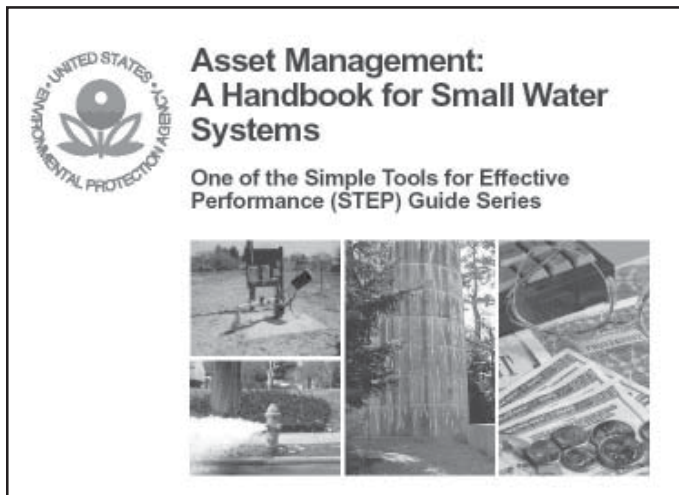
To access the booklet on-line, go to http://www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsys/pdfs/guide_smallsystems_sdwa.pdf.

For a copy, call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791. Reference Document Number EPA 816-R-03-017.



Now Available: Asset Handbook for Small Water Systems

A new booklet called **Asset Management: A Handbook for Small Water Systems** – one of the *Simple Tools for Effective Performance (STEP) Guide Series* is now available. It is designed to help guide small drinking water systems through the process of developing an asset management plan. The booklet includes worksheets for completing a thorough asset inventory; prioritizing the rehabilitation and replacement of assets; and developing and implementing a simple asset management plan.



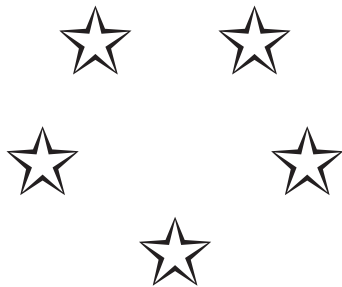
To access the booklet on-line, go to www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsys/pdfs/guide_smallsystems_asset_mgmnt.pdf.

For a copy, call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791. Ask for Document Number EPA 816-R-03-016.

An index of all documents in the series is available at www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsys/ssinfo.htm.

Applications Due for Five-Star Restoration Grants

The National Association of Counties, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Habitat Council, in cooperation with EPA, the Community-Based Restoration Program within NOAA Fisheries, and other sponsors, are pleased to solicit applications for the **Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant Program**.



The Five-Star Restoration Program provides modest financial assistance on a competitive basis. Funds are to be used to support community-based wetland, riparian and coastal habitat restoration projects that build diverse partnerships and foster local natural resource stewardship through education, outreach and training activities.

In 2003, 56 projects received grants of on average \$10,000, out of about 240 applications received.

The Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant program is open to any public or private entity. Projects must involve diverse partnerships of ideally five organizations that contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support, and/or other in-kind services. Projects must include a strong on-the-ground wetland, riparian or coastal habitat restoration component.

They also should include training, education, outreach, monitoring and community stewardship components.

Preference will be given to projects that 1) are part of a larger watershed or community stewardship effort; 2) include specific provisions for long-term management, monitoring and protection; and 3) demonstrate the value of innovative, collaborative approaches to restoring the nation's waters.

Applications must be post-marked by **March 1, 2004**. For application materials and more information, visit EPA's website: www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/5star.

Watershed-Based Permitting Guidance Available

A guidance document describing EPA's recommendations for watershed-based permitting under the **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)** program, is now available online.

The NPDES program is a wastewater discharge permitting program which regulates the types and amounts of pollutants that can be released to U.S. waters.

The approach outlined in the guidance is aimed at achieving new efficiencies and environmental results through the NPDES program.

The watershed approach to permitting provides a process for considering all stressors within a hydrologically-defined drainage basin, rather than addressing individual pollutant sources on a discharge-by-discharge basis.

The guidance is available online at: www.epa.gov/npdes/watersheds.

EPA Launches First Electronic Permit Application

EPA has developed an electronic, completely paperless, **online permit application system**. The new system is designed for use by construction companies that need coverage under EPA's **NPDES stormwater permitting program**. This free electronic stormwater application is also known as the Stormwater Notice of Intent or **eNOI**.



The eNOI system saves construction companies time and money with a simple, fast, and accurate application process. In Region 10, the

eNOI system is available to construction operators in the states of Idaho and Alaska, and in Indian country and other areas where EPA is the NPDES permitting authority. You can learn more about the new system at www.epa.gov/npdes/enoi.

Another important feature of the system is that it provides, for the first time ever, public access to stormwater construction NOIs. Using the search features (*see options as shown below*) at www.epa.gov/npdes/noisearch, the public now has real-time

access to important information about Clean Water Act-permitted construction activities that may affect them.

Over the coming months, EPA plans to add more features to the eNOI system and make it available to the states that operate the NPDES stormwater permitting program under delegated authority, including Oregon and Washington.

If you have questions, contact Jeanne O'Dell at 1-800-424-4372 or 206/553-6919, e-mail Odell.Jeanne@epa.gov.

Owner/Operator Information

Name (contains): or or
 City: State: Zip Code:

Project/Site Information

Name (contains): or or
 City:
 State: County:
 Zip Code:

Application Information

Status: Region:

Attention Boaters, Marina Operators: Handbook

Shipshape Shores and Waters, a 17-page handbook for marina operators and recreational boaters, is now available.



Boaters can learn how to keep "shipshape" with boat cleaning and maintenance, sound boating practices, proper sewage disposal, and more.



Marina operators will get tips for maintaining clean marinas and clear waters to draw patrons. Tips include ways to store and handle liquids, manage fueling stations, and even ways to design marinas.

Call EPA at 1-800-424-4372 or 206/553-1200 for a free copy.

West Nile Virus and Wetlands

The West Nile Virus has been the center of much attention since it appeared in the United States in 1999. Because mosquitoes can transmit the virus, mosquito control measures also have received more attention lately.

Healthy wetlands are important for controlling mosquito populations, because they support mosquito predators such as fish and amphibians. A new 4-page brochure called **Wetlands and West Nile Virus** explores this topic.

The brochure explains the important role healthy wetlands play in controlling mosquito populations, presents some history on the virus, and gives some medical facts. The brochure also offers tips to protect yourself and a list of resources both in print and on the Internet.

For a free copy of this EPA brochure, call the Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Learn About Estuaries on Free CDROM

What's an Estuary? Now You Know is the title of a free CDROM now available through EPA.

In case you don't know, an estuary "is that rare and special place where freshwater meets salt water." Estuaries are the most productive ecosystems on Earth.

The 8-minute CD features full-color, scenic video and photography from a variety of estuaries. The multimedia presentation explains what estuaries are, why they are important, economic implications, and things we can do to protect them.

The project is led by the Association of National Estuary Programs.

For your free copy, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or toll-free at 1-800-424-4372.



Suquamish Students Win Presidential Award

A group of students recently earned recognition from the Environmental Protection Agency for turning a water runoff basin into an educational marshland. The students received their **President's Environmental Youth Award** in a ceremony at the EPA offices in Washington, D.C.

The students from Suquamish Elementary School in North Kitsap, known as the "Pond Kids," were recruited to serve as the Student Advisory Board to engage all the students of the school in transforming the fenced-off gully into a wetland habitat.

In the spring of 2000, a small group of Suquamish Elementary students, staff and volunteers, in partnership with the Suquamish Indian Tribe, began the planning to transform the water run-off area of the parking lot into a marshland. The Basket Marsh is now an environmental center that weaves together all the subjects studied in school – reading, writing, art, math and science.

It also serves as a common place to learn about the native culture of the area and respect for differences. Nature and native cultures influenced the created environment.

The President's Environmental Youth Awards program – celebrating 32 years of recognizing student excellence and achievement – has two components: the regional certificate program and the national awards competition.

Regional certificates from the President of the United States are awarded by each of the ten EPA regions. One outstanding project from each region is presented with a Presidential plaque at an EPA-sponsored award ceremony. Youth of any age—from kindergarten through high school—can enter as individuals, or as a group. Young people from around the country are invited annually to participate in the awards program which is aimed at encouraging individuals, school classes, summer camps, public interest groups, and youth organizations to promote environmental awareness and positive community involvement.

For more information on the awards program, visit www.epa.gov/enviroed/awards.html. Or call Sally Hanft, EPA Region 10, at 206/553-1207 or 1-800-424-4372, or e-mail hanft.sally@epa.gov.



Suquamish Students Honored: in the picture with Marianne Horinko, Acting EPA Administrator, are the "Pond Kids" Sabrina Dent, Cassandra George, Jordan Schultz, Erika Scott, Winona Sigo-Heridia, Erica Trout, Laura Wicklein, Zoe Worthington, and Noel Purser, a high school student who worked with the group.

New Website on Tribal Water Standards, Criteria

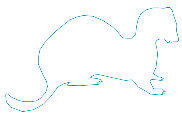
EPA has created a new Internet site on **Water Quality Standards & Criteria in Indian Country**.

This internet site is designed to help meet the goal of clean and safe water in Indian country. An approved Indian tribe can set the water quality goals for all surface waters (e.g., streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands) on the reservation.

The tribe also can certify whether activities that require a federal license or permit are consistent with the tribe's water quality standards.

This is the first time tribes will have all relevant water quality standards information available in one place to assist them in developing standards.

Visit the website at www.epa.gov/waterscience/tribes/index.htm.



Paper Reveals Views on Watershed Planning

A new paper is available describing perceptions about watershed planning in Washington State. The research was conducted by Vanessa Mazal, a PhD candidate with the University of Washington Environmental Anthropology Program, with grant funding from EPA.

In the paper, Mazal reveals how stakeholders and managers view the current state of collaborative watershed management. It gives insight into how things actually are working "on the ground" and builds understanding about how collaborative forums operate in practice.

Although the research was conducted primarily in the Kettle River Watershed and the Nisqually River Watershed, it is likely relevant to other areas of Washington State. The findings may be useful to anyone who may be planning future watershed training, support, program development or research.

For a copy of this 70-page document, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

"Beach Currents" Makes News



EPA recently released the first issue of **Beach Currents**, a periodic national newsletter promoting communication among state, tribal, and local public health officials about their efforts to protect our beaches.

The first edition features the experiences of Maine, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin in developing their Beach Monitoring programs. The second issue will come out in March.

Beach management professionals may submit articles sharing their successes and challenges.

Beach Currents is available online at www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/currents/.

Environmental Learning Gets \$200,000 Boost

In December, EPA announced its support of environmental education efforts in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska with 16 grants totaling \$198,677. The grants are awarded annually to tribes, state and local governments, and to non-profit organizations, schools and universities.

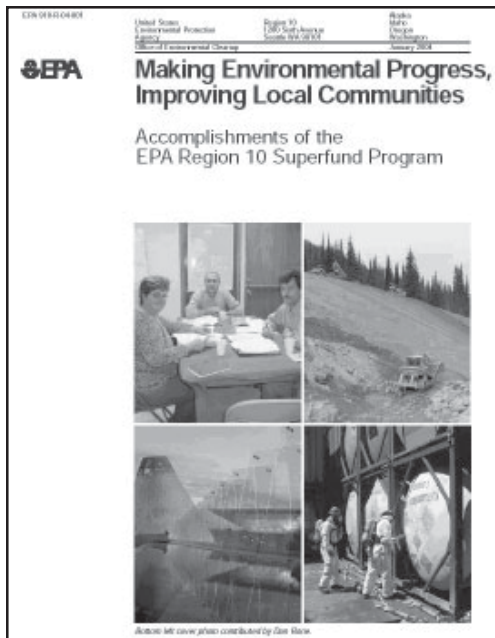
According to Sally Hanft, EPA's Regional Grants Coordinator, environmental education and the grant program are keys to reaching the region's overall goals of promoting environmental stewardship and protection.

"With environmental education grants, we get a great bang for our buck!" Hanft said. "We are impressed year after year with how much students, teachers and community members are able to accomplish with these grants."

The grant deadline for the latest round of awards has passed, but stay tuned for next year!

More information on applying for a grant can be found online or by calling EPA at 1-800-424-4372 or 206/553-1200.

Booklet Outlines Superfund Accomplishments



A new 14-page booklet highlighting the accomplishments of EPA's regional Superfund Program is now available. The Superfund Program is focused on cleaning up the nation's most hazardous contaminated waste sites. In 2003, the regional program not only continued cleanup work at several priority sites; it also assessed 100 sites, acted on more than 5,300 spill notifications, and responded to 31 emergencies.

The booklet, ***Making Environmental Progress, Improving Local Communities***, discusses this important work going on in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. For a free copy, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372. Or you can download it from EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/Region10/>.



CALENDAR

Deadline for contributions to the May issue of **WaterTalk** is April 16. Andrea Lindsay, Editor, lindsay.andrea@epa.gov, 1-800-424-4372 x1896, 206/553-1896.

February

23–24: Security Seminar for Small Utilities, Boise, Idaho, www.awwa.org/education/seminars.

March

1: Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant applications due. (See earlier article on page 5.)

May

2–8: National Drinking Water Week, American Water Works Association, www.awwa.org.

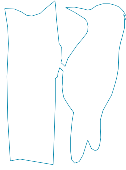
3–7: International Boreal Forest Research Association Scientific Conference: Climate Disturbance Interactions in Boreal Forest Ecosystems, Fairbanks, AK, www.lter.uaf.edu/ibfra/default.cfm.

Beneficial Landscaping -- Save Those Snags!

The August 2003 edition of **WaterTalk** discussed the benefits of downed wood in the landscape. The recent wind, snow and ice storms in the Pacific Northwest have produced an ample supply to enhance the wildlife and other values in your landscape! The storms also created many broken trees. Broken-top live trees, dead, and partially-dead standing trees, called **snags**, are the result.

As with downed wood, snags may appear untidy to humans, but wildlife (birds, mammals, insects, invertebrates) see them as a localized Shangri-La! Snags of all species, heights, diameters, and states of decomposition are of value.

Before you “rev up” the chainsaw, consider that unless a snag poses a safety hazard, it is a great idea to retain it for the many benefits it can provide. These include: cavity nest sites, nesting platforms, feeding substrates, plucking posts, singing or drumming sites, food caches or granaries, courtship locations, overwintering sites, roosts, lookout posts, hunting and hawking perches, fledging sites, dwellings or dens, loafing sites, nesting under



bark, communal nesting or nursery colonies, nut-cracking anvil sites, thermally regulated habitat to escape excessive heat or cold, and substrate for plants and fungi.⁽¹⁾ No wonder snags are often called wildlife condominiums!

Snag location is also a consideration. Snags have the greatest value when they are part of or connected to a forest. If a snag is relatively isolated, it is helpful to surround it with shrubs, small trees or other vegetation to protect it from wind and to provide a more hospitable environment for wildlife near the snag.

In his book, ***Landscaping for Wildlife***,⁽²⁾ Russell Link points out that snags in urban areas are best located away from high activity areas where they won't pose a hazard. Otherwise they should be left in as many different habitats as possible, such as along streams, in ravines, marshes, lakes, at the edges of greenbelts, and in virtually any vegetated open space that can safely accommodate it.

Where and when snags are not so plentiful as they are now, they can be created from live trees that are

damaged, or that are undesirable for reasons such as shading, spacing, or invasive roots.

For ways to create snags from live trees, consult a good reference (*see those listed below*), and consider hiring a knowledgeable, reputable tree service.

For more information on this or other topics in beneficial landscaping, contact Elaine Somers at 206/553-2966 or 1-800-424-4372, somers.elaine@epa.gov, or visit our website at www.epa.gov/r10earth/bl.htm.

References:

(1) Brown, E. Reade, Tech. Ed. *Management of Wildlife and Fish Habitats in Forests of Western Oregon and Washington*. Pacific Northwest Region, U.S.D.A. Forest Service. 1985.

(2) Link, Russell. *Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1999.

(3) Stevens, Michelle L, and Ron Vanbianchi, principal authors. Washington Department of Ecology. *Restoring Wetlands in Washington: A Guidebook for Wetland Restoration, Planning and Implementation*, Publication #93-17. 1993.



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WaterTalk

Alaska Idaho Oregon Washington

WaterTalk is published quarterly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10. *WaterTalk* seeks to be a useful tool for those who protect water resources and ecosystems in communities of the Greater Pacific Northwest, by providing practical resources and relevant agency news.

You are invited to contribute items for publication. Submittal deadline is the 15th day of the month before publication. *WaterTalk* articles can be used in other publications. Please give credit to *WaterTalk*.

For mailing list changes, or to contact the editor, call Andrea Lindsay at (206) 553-1896 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1896, or e-mail lindsay.andrea@epa.gov.

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In This Issue

EPA News

**National Drinking
Water Week**

**Water Efficiency
Issues**

Handy Tools

**Beneficial
Landscaping**