

WaterTalk Newsletter

November 2001

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EPA Helps In National Recovery

Since September 11, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been helping in the response to the terrorist attacks. Following the attacks, EPA had people on site in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania within hours. Since then, the agency has taken hundreds of samples of the air, dust, water, river sediments and drinking water. The samples have been analyzed for pollutants that might pose a health risk to response workers at the World Trade Center and Pentagon sites, and the public. The data confirms that there are no significant public health risks to residents, visitors or workers beyond the immediate World Trade Center area. Sampling results are available on the web at the site listed below.

EPA is also helping with debris removal, worker decontamination, and cleanup of dust and debris from the streets using HEPA vacuum trucks. EPA has provided rescue workers and others onsite with protective gear and health and safety advice. In addition, EPA is providing direct criminal investigative support to the FBI in both the World Trade Center and Pentagon investigations.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, EPA has been hard at work extending its traditional mission to protect the public health and the environment to the protection of the United States from terrorist attacks. EPA is contributing to "homeland security" in the areas of preparedness, response, monitoring, and risk assessment. For details about agency efforts, visit www.epa.gov/epahome/wtc/.

Following is information about what is being done to keep our drinking water supplies safe.

Keeping Our Water Supplies Safe

Drinking Water Utilities Are On Guard Against Security Threats

The security of our drinking water supplies has received increased attention since the events of September 11. Actually, the drinking water industry has been enhancing security for the past few years, in cooperation with EPA. Water utilities across the nation have already taken many actions

to increase security and reduce terrorism threats.

The possibility of successful contamination of a water system is small. It would take large amounts of contaminants to threaten a system's safety. And, systems already in place for treating drinking water before it comes out of the tap will, in many cases, remove any immediate threat to public health. (Also, water is a poor delivery mechanism for anthrax; filtration is effective at removing it from drinking water.)

To help continue efforts to keep water supplies safe, a new factsheet for utilities is available on the Drinking Water section of the Region 10 website: www.epa.gov/r10earth. You may also request copies by calling 1-800-424-4EPA and requesting: *Keeping Our Water Supplies Safe*. It lists some specific actions water utilities can take now to enhance security even further. Many of these measures are recommended by the American Water Works Association, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, and other professional organizations. Recommended measures include:

- Guarding against physical intrusion
- Making security a priority for employees
- Investing in security and infrastructure improvements

The Possibility is Small – And We Stand Ready Resources for Water Utilities

In general, **the possibility is small** that drinking water could be affected by terrorist activities. EPA is working closely with law enforcement officials, Department of Defense, and the drinking water industry **to be prepared** to minimize the effects of an attack. What help is available to drinking water systems?

EPA, other federal agencies, and industry and managerial trade associations are working to provide support to water utilities. EPA is working with American Water Works Association (AWWA) and other groups to develop training courses and "train-the-trainer" materials to help utilities and state personnel assess vulnerabilities and improve security. EPA is working with the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies and other groups to develop an *Information Sharing and Analysis Center* to bolster coordinated notification and response to threats and vulnerabilities. Technical projects are underway to assess the fate and transport of potential agents in water, and to increase security of critical water data. Other activities include:

1. The water industry including the AWWA and its Research Foundation along with the National Rural Water Association are preparing seminars and online learning courses for water system staff this fall. For details on these trainings visit www.awwa.org and www.awwarf.com. Planned trainings include:

- A Manager's Guide to Keeping Your Water Utility Safe, November 2001 to January 2002*
- Security Seminar in A Box, November 2001*
- Webcast Security Training, December 2001*

-Online Institute, February 2001

2. Experts at EPA can give help in how to detect and monitor for contamination, give advice on actions to take and refer water systems to other government experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and US Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground. Call 1-800-426-4791 to get help to be prepared.

3. Training is available for utilities in how to:

- judge the weak spots in your security
- create an action plan to guard against attack
- develop an emergency response plan

Contact Gene Taylor, Region 10 Drinking Water Program, at 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1389 for more information.

4. For large utilities, the FBI will conduct background checks on employees.

For more information about keeping our water supplies safe, visit these web sites:

EPA Counterterrorism:

<http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/ecounterterrorism.html>

EPA Alert on Chemical Accident Prevention and Site Security:

<http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/pubs/secale.pdf>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov>

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies:

<http://www.amwa.net/isac/amwacip.html>

American Water Works Association:

<http://awwa.org>

National League of Cities:

http://www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/newsroom/terrorism_response

Online Symposium To Address Local Response to Terrorism Threat

Between November 13-19, 2001, the Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) will conduct an online event focusing on what small- and medium-sized communities can do to prepare for and cope with the threat of terrorism. The program will be moderated by Lawrence J. Hogan, a former U.S. Congressman, county executive, and FBI agent. He is the editor of a recently published

book, *Terrorism: Defensive Strategies for Individuals, Companies, and Governments*. To learn more, visit the Web site: http://www.riskinstitute.org/symposium_signup.asp

Comment on Coeur d'Alene Basin Cleanup Plan

After several years of intensive study and collaboration with state, federal and local agencies, EPA's Superfund program is now ready to release its cleanup proposal for the Coeur d'Alene River Basin. Parts of the Basin have been severely affected by over 100 years of intensive mining activity. At one time, the area was one of the largest producers of lead and silver in the world. Due to past practices, a legacy of threats to people and the environment remains. EPA is especially concerned about the risks to children who may be exposed to lead in the soils around their homes and the waterfowl that die each year as they pass through parts of the Basin on their southerly migration.

The Proposed Plan for cleanup of mine waste contamination in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin is now available for public review. The Plan describes EPA's preferred course of action for addressing the human health and environmental risks. The Plan includes proposed actions for areas throughout the Basin – from Mullan, Idaho to the Spokane River in Washington.

The Proposed Plan is the formal opportunity for the public to comment on EPA's cleanup plan for the Basin. After reviewing and responding to comments, EPA will issue its final Record of Decision in 2002.

EPA will accept written comments on the Proposed Plan until November 28. EPA will extend the comment period an additional 30 days upon request. Send written comments to: Sheila Eckman, Coeur d'Alene Basin Team Leader, EPA, 1200 6th Avenue, ECL-113, Seattle, WA 98101.

To review the cleanup plan or learn how to get a copy, visit EPA's Coeur d'Alene Basin website: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cda>

EPA will host the following public meetings where you can learn more and provide oral comments. For times and locations, call Marianne Deppman, 206/553-1237 or 1-800-424-4372.

November 13, Wallace, ID

November 14, Cataldo, ID

November 15, Coeur d'Alene, ID

November 19, Spokane, WA

WATERWORDS

Regional Temperature Guidance Available for Public Comment

EPA Region 10 is now accepting comments from the public on its draft **Guidance for State and**

Tribal Temperature Water Quality Standards. The draft guidance describes how States and Tribes in the Pacific Northwest may establish a water quality standard for temperature that meets the requirements of the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act and supports sustainable populations of native salmonids.

Once final, the guidance is intended to streamline the process for getting Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act approval for state and tribal temperature standards across the region.

EPA will accept written comments on the draft guidance until December 21, 2001. In addition, EPA will host workshops in Oregon, Idaho and Washington in November and December (dates and locations to be determined) to discuss the draft guidance and get feedback from the public in each state.

To review the guidance, visit EPA's website: www.epa.gov/r10earth/water.htm
If you prefer to have a copy of the guidance mailed to you, call EPA at 1-800-424-4372. Send comments to John Palmer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 6th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101.

Comment on Draft TMDL Cost Study

EPA is seeking comment on its draft cost study of the **total maximum daily load** (TMDL) program for polluted waterbodies. TMDLs are pollution limits set for a waterway, depending on its use. These limits are allocated among all the pollutant sources impacting an impaired water. The report was requested by Congress last fall, and focuses on the costs to the government and polluters of the existing TMDL program. Comments are due by December 7, 2001. A copy of the report and additional information are available at www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl.

TOOLS

Find Out About Toxic Chemicals In Your Community

Interested in learning about toxic chemicals in your community? In 1986, Congress enacted the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act. The Act requires information about the nature of hazardous substances in or near communities be made available to the public. It also provides penalty for companies that do not comply, and it allows citizens to file lawsuits against companies and government agencies to force them to obey the law.

Certain businesses are required to submit reports each year on the amounts of toxic chemicals their facilities release into the environment, either routinely or as a result of accidents. The collection of these reports is the **Toxic Release Inventory** (TRI). Partially funded by EPA and produced by Washington State, the TRI database provides citizens in any state with information about potentially hazardous chemicals and their use.

The **Toxic Release Inventory Display System (TRIDS)** displays the TRI data in a user friendly way for the general public. TRIDS does not analyze the data. It simply displays annually reported legal releases of toxic chemicals to the air, land, water, sewers, and other offsite transfers. It is free and available in Spanish. TRIDS can be downloaded from the Internet (it's a big file) at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/epcra/trids/Index.html>. Or, folks without Internet access can request a CD ROM from Idell Hansen at 360/407-6727 or Washington's Hazardous Substance Information Office at 1-800-633-7585.

TRIDS removes a level of bureaucracy and encourages a closer relationship between facilities and communities. The ultimate goal of TRIDS is to raise awareness among citizens and to provoke questions from citizens to the facilities. Based on citizen petitions, chemicals have been added to the list of reportable chemicals, and thresholds for chemicals already on the list have been lowered.

For more information, call Kris Colt, EPA, at 206/553-4016 or 1-800-424-4372 x4016, or e-mail colt.christina@epa.gov.

Reminder--Education Grants Due!

Environmental Education Grant proposals must be postmarked by November 15. This annual EPA grant program provides financial support for projects which design, demonstrate, or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. Schools, universities, not-for-profits, and government education agencies are eligible to apply. For information and forms, visit www.epa.gov/enviroed, or call 1-800-424-4372 or 206/553-1200.

What's Up With Our Nation's Waters?

Do you know what percentage of our nation's waters are clean, what pollutes the waters that aren't, and what you can do to help? EPA has produced a 24-page booklet, designed primarily for children aged ten to 15, that presents key findings of the National Water Quality Inventory in an easy-to-read format. The booklet includes projects for school or for fun, a water quiz, a glossary, and a list of resources for more information. The booklet **What's Up With Our Nation's Waters?** can be viewed on-line at www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/nationswaters/waters.pdf. Limited copies are also available from EPA Region 10 at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Ecosystem Poster Available

EPA now has limited copies of colorful poster available free. Called **A Healthy Ecosystem**, the large poster depicts a stream habitat with wildlife and water critters. For a copy, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 1-800-424-4372 or 206/553-1200.

More Watershed Funding Workshops Coming

More of the very popular **Watershed Funding Workshops** are on their way. Folks in Washington can mark their calendars now for the following dates:

Feb 5 - Sequim/Port Angeles

Feb 7 - Mt. Vernon

Feb 12 - Yakima

Feb 14 - Moses Lake

The workshops will help watershed councils, advisory group members, tribes, local governments, and others working for watershed protection get the funding they need. Participants will learn about innovative funding strategies, partnership opportunities, and federal, state, and private funding sources. These workshops will provide opportunities to learn and share with other watershed groups that have been successful in finding funding for their watershed protection and restoration activities.

With support from EPA, US Army Corps of Engineers, and state environmental agencies, Boise State University's Environmental Finance Center is providing these workshops. Oregon dates will be announced soon. (Workshops have already been completed in Alaska and Idaho.) The cost to attend a workshop is \$25 per registrant. The fee includes workshop materials, refreshments during the workshop, and lunch. Online registration is available at <http://sspa.boisestate.edu/efc>. To register in person or for further information, contact Paul Woods at 208/426-4990 or by e-mail at pwoods@boisestate.edu.

Funds for Water Conservation, Polluted Runoff

Folks looking for environmental funding opportunities may want to check out two fact sheets available from EPA: **Cleaning Up Polluted Runoff with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund**, and **Funding Water Conservation and Reuse with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund**.

The **Clean Water State Revolving Fund** (CWSRF) is a loan program which can fund point source, nonpoint source, and estuary projects. The state revolving fund program works like banks: federal and state contributions are used to capitalize or set up the program. These assets, in turn, are used to make low or no-interest loans. Repaid funds are recycled to fund other water quality projects.

These two fact sheets describe how the CWSRF works, how to fund a project, sources of loan repayments, and examples of successful projects. This information may be useful to engineers, local and public health officials, operators, planners, finance officers, and the general public. For a copy, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Free Watershed Training On-Line

EPA invites you to take watershed training on-line, at your convenience, for free! The

Watershed Academy's Distance Learning Program is a set of self-paced training modules that represents a basic but broad introduction to watershed management. This program's goal is to provide useful information to support efforts to improve the health of our Nation's waters by protecting and managing watersheds. The target audience includes local, state, tribal, and federal officials as well as citizens and private practitioners of watershed management.

Training modules cover the most important watershed management topics, about which watershed managers, local officials, involved citizens, decision makers, and others should have at least an introductory level of knowledge. Web modules resemble interactive 'guest lectures' by leaders in watershed management. The length and complexity of each module varies, but most are at the college freshman level of instruction and require ½ to 2 hours each to complete. Completing a series of 15 of these modules earns the Watershed Academy Web Training Certificate.

The training is available at no cost, at anytime, worldwide. Trainees may choose the training modules most suited to their own jobs, training needs, and education. Modules cover watershed ecology, watershed change, analysis and planning, management practices, and community/social context. Check it out at <http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/>.

Adopt-Your-Watershed Now Offers On-Line Updates

In 1998 EPA worked with a number of partners to establish a national, on-line database of watershed groups, volunteer monitoring organizations, schools, and others working to protect and restore our nation's water resources. Currently more than 3,000 organizations are listed in the **Adopt Your Watershed** database, which is just one of several searchable databases available in the new *Watershed Information Network* (www.epa.gov/win).

All groups that are signed up now have the option of going on-line at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/water/adopt.nsf/update> to update their information. Watershed partnerships not currently listed can join by going to the Adopt Your Watershed homepage (www.epa.gov/adopt) and clicking "Join Now." The goal is to provide citizens with an easy way to learn about opportunities to get involved in their community, as well as to provide a network for groups to share information, tools, and resources.

Check Out Updated Water System Website

Looking for community water and wastewater information on the web? Be sure to go to the **National Environmental Services Center's** (NESC) newly redesigned website. At <http://www.nesc.wvu.edu> you can learn about treatment technologies, management and financial strategies, environmental regulations, and other issues related to running a small community water or wastewater system. NESC also provides information about environmental training for educators.

Funded by EPA, NESC is made up of four programs.

- National Drinking Water Clearinghouse <http://www.ndwc.wvu.edu>
- National Small Flows Clearinghouse <http://www.nsfc.wvu.edu>
- National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities <http://www.netcsc.wvu.edu>
- National Onsite Demonstration Program <http://www.nodp.wvu.edu>

The web site offers access to free environmental magazines and newsletters, hundreds of free and low-cost products, database searches, technical assistance, and online discussion groups. For details call 1-800-624-8301.

EPA Releases GIS Software Tool

EPA has released version 3.0 of the **Better Assessment Science Integrating point and Nonpoint Sources (BASINS)** software system. BASINS enables environmental professionals to use GIS tools to examine environmental information, analyze environmental systems, and evaluate management alternatives. This new release allows users and developers to add their own software to the BASINS system. It includes many new features and improvements, including tools to allow users to delineate watersheds, select watershed models, and see and compare the results of several watershed model simulations. Information about BASINS 3.0 is available at <http://www.epa.gov/ost/basins/>. CDs with the new version can be ordered from this web site.

Green Business Directory for Puget Sound

An on-line version of the popular **Green Business Directory** lists businesses and organizations in the Puget Sound region that are committed to protecting our environment. The purpose of this directory is to help you as a consumer, choose environmentally sound businesses. Check it out on the web at www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/greenbiz. Or, for a free copy call King County at 206/296-8800.

Water News On-Line

Washington e-Water News is now available at www.wsu.edu/swwrc/newsletter. The current issue includes articles on irrigation impacts, the UW Center for Urban Water Resources Management, a research study using geochemical fingerprints to aid non-point pollution studies, and the Pacific Northwest regional partnership for water quality education, extension, and research.

SPOTLIGHT

Horses for Clean Water

Here is a successful model of a local program offering practical ways to protect our watersheds: **Horses for Clean Water**. This program, made possible through public and private program

partners, is run by horseowners promoting environmentally sensitive horsekeeping.

Horses for Clean Water offers farm tours, classroom series, workshops and demonstration farms. Although many activities are centered in the Puget Sound area, they are open to anyone. Horseowners can get tips on managing manure, pastures, and mud. They can learn about composting, wildlife enhancement, fencing, horse health, and native landscaping. Also, farm tours provide an excellent opportunity for horseowners to take a first-hand look at different environmentally sensitive management options. Ultimately, the education benefits the horses, the farms, the neighborhoods, and the environment.

Horses for Clean Water grew out of the King County Model Horse Farm Project, partially funded by EPA. This project promoted environmentally sensitive horsekeeping through model farms as educational sites. A "wholistic approach" to horse care was emphasized-- horse owners were encouraged to evaluate their time, money, resources and the needs of the horse while designing a system for managing their horse places.

Visit the web site at www.horsesforcleanwater.com for more information. Or, contact program director Alayne Blickle at 425/432-6116 or by e-mail at alayne.blickle@horsesforcleanwater.com.

ECOSYSTEM

Beneficial Landscaping -- Amphibians Need Our Special Consideration

Amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders, newt) are animals that typically hatch as aquatic larvae, which breathe through gills. The larvae then become adults with air breathing lungs. Growth and breeding take place in wetlands. But most of the year, amphibians live in upland forest, shrub, and other vegetated habitats. Upland, especially forested upland habitat, is just as critical to the survival of these species as are wetland habitats.

Though not all wetlands are safe from development, legal protections for wetlands are more common than for upland habitats. When land is developed, wetland buffers, which serve to protect the wetland ecological functions and values, are often required. But the buffers are of limited width and they vary in composition. Because amphibians may migrate hundreds of yards from wetland breeding sites, wetland buffers do not necessarily provide adequate habitat protection for them. Amphibians need adequate forest, shrub, and other natural vegetated upland habitat within a half mile of their breeding site, and safe movement corridors (habitat linkages) to access that habitat. So how can we help to meet these habitat needs?

Protect existing natural areas (woodlands, wetlands, meadows, stream corridors, shorelines). Preserve wildlife habitat on your own property, encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same, and support public acquisition of greenbelts, remnant forests, and other wild areas.

Protect buffer areas that exist next to streams, lakes, or ponds. The buffers protect the breeding habitat, and provide some upland habitat for amphibians.

Be an advocate for maintaining or restoring native growth near wetland buffers to provide connections with suitable upland habitat.

Preserve the leaf litter under trees and shrubs. Where amphibians may need to cross open lawn areas, leaves provide cover, moisture, and attract food organisms.

Wherever possible, protect known paths between uplands and breeding sites from automobiles and lawn mowers. If amphibian migrations to and from breeding sites involve neighborhood road crossings, try placing signs to inform drivers during spring and fall migrations. If a new road is to be constructed in migration areas, work for installation of amphibian crossing structures, such as small tunnels under the roadway. Contact us for more information regarding crossing structures.

Leave a portion of your grass unmowed, especially in areas that adjoin a wet area, forest edge, or any other distinct habitat. If you must mow in these areas, first survey the area and move any animals to a safe location prior to mowing. Set the mower blades as high as possible, or use a weed-eater and leave grass 6 inches high.

Consider building a small, fish-free (fish eat all stages of amphibians) **pond** for frogs, toads, turtles, and salamanders. For more information on pond construction, contact us or your state fish and wildlife agency.

Avoid using pesticides and herbicides. Amphibians have skin that can absorb toxic chemicals from your lawn, and they can be poisoned through their food, such as slugs and snails.

Retain stumps, logs, or other moisture-holding debris. With permission from landowners, you could also salvage these materials from cleared/logged areas and install them in your landscape. And,

Celebrate when you have the good fortune to see and enjoy these amazing animals!

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

Reference: Link, Russell. Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. University of Washington Press, 1999.

CALENDAR

November

6: Vomocil Water Quality Conference, Corvallis, Oregon. Oregon State University Extension, 541/737-2041.

8-9: Rural Idaho: Challenged to Change, Caldwell, Idaho. Andrus Center for Public Policy, www.andruscenter.org, 208/426-4218.

12-16: Annual Conference of the Association of Oregon Counties, Pendleton, Oregon. 503/585-8351.

13-19: Community Response to Threat of Terrorism, On-Line Symposium, http://www.riskinstitute.org/symposium_signup.asp

27-28: Northwest Environmental Conference, Portland, Oregon. Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, 503/229-5946, www.nwec.org

December

11-13: Basic Water Works, course for small water system operators, Tacoma, Washington. Washington Environmental Training Center, www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/wetrc, 1-800-562-0858, 253/833-9111 x3369.

January

16: Deadline for February WaterTalk. Andrea Lindsay, Editor, 206/553-1896 or 1-800-424-4372 x1896, lindsay.andrea@epa.gov.

February

5: Watershed Funding Workshop, Sequim/Port Angeles, WA. Environmental Finance Center, 208/426-4990, www.sspa.boisestate.edu/efc.

7: Watershed Funding Workshop, Mt. Vernon, WA. Environmental Finance Center, 208/426-4990, www.sspa.boisestate.edu/efc.

12: Watershed Funding Workshop, Yakima, WA. Environmental Finance Center, 208/426-4990, www.sspa.boisestate.edu/efc.

14: Watershed Funding Workshop, Moses Lake, WA. Environmental Finance Center, 208/426-4990, www.sspa.boisestate.edu/efc.

20-21: Research and Extension Regional Water Quality Conference, Vancouver, Washington. Washington State University, 1-800-942-4978, 509/335-0945, www.wsu.edu/swwrc/.

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WaterTalk is published each February, May, August, and November 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 changes, or to contact the editor, call Andrea Lindsay at 206/553-1896 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1 896, or email lindsay.andrea@epa.gov.

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