



~~REPORT TO THE SENATE ON~~  
~~AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY~~  
UNITED STATES SENATE

~~74-0606~~  
095987



Data Available From Federal Agencies  
On The Universe Of Need For  
Water And Waste Disposal Systems  
In Rural Areas B-166506

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES

~~701806~~ / 095987

DEC. 28, 1973



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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The Honorable Herman E. Talmadge, Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture and Forestry § 100  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your February 1, 1973, letter requested that we report to you on our survey of the data available from Federal agencies on the universe of need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal facilities in rural areas. The results of our survey are summarized in this letter and are presented in more detail in the accompanying report.

We obtained the information from those Federal agencies and regional commissions which provide financial assistance for constructing water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems and from several other agencies which carry out related programs, functions, or research activities.

In our survey we considered a rural area as any area not in a city or town with a population exceeding 10,000. This definition is stated in the Rural Development Act of 1972 as a criterion for obtaining a Farmers Home Administration loan or grant for constructing water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems.

Our survey showed that available data did not provide an adequate basis for determining the need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems in rural areas. Certain agencies had some but not complete data on the need for rural water and sewage systems; none had data on the need for rural solid waste disposal systems. The data available on water and sewage needs could not be combined because:

- The agencies had developed it for different periods or had used different guidelines and standards on what constituted need for new or improved systems.

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--In some instances it overlapped; excluded some rural areas, included some nonrural areas, or was otherwise limited in scope; or was outdated.

Two agencies--the Environmental Protection Agency and the Water Resources Council--are currently obtaining certain nationwide or regional data on the need for water and sewage systems.

Data on the need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems could be useful to cognizant Federal agencies and congressional committees. However, to insure that such data will be useful to all interested parties and to avoid expensive duplication of effort, a unified and carefully planned effort by all agencies having program responsibilities in rural areas would be needed. The report presents essential considerations which should enter into such an effort.

As agreed with your office, we obtained and considered in our report the comments of the agencies and commissions we contacted in our survey. We will not distribute this report further unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

We will be pleased to provide additional details if you desire.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James B. Axtell".

Comptroller General  
of the United States

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## ABBREVIATIONS

EDA	Economic Development Administration
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERS	Economic Research Service
FHA	Farmers Home Administration
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
SCS	Soil Conservation Service

REPORT ON THE DATA AVAILABLE  
FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES ON THE UNIVERSE OF NEED  
FOR WATER AND WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS  
IN RURAL AREAS

The Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, U.S. Senate, requested us to conduct a survey to determine what information was available from Federal agencies on the universe of need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal facilities in rural areas.

SCOPE OF SURVEY

We made our survey primarily at those Federal agencies and commissions which provided direct financial assistance in constructing water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems. These were the Farmers Home Administration (FHA), Department of Agriculture; the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Commerce; the Appalachian Regional Commission; and the seven regional commissions established pursuant to title V of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. 3181 et seq.).

*Handwritten notes:*  
358, 42, 23, 24, 371, 74, 157

We also contacted several Federal agencies which, although not directly involved in assisting in the construction of such systems and facilities, carried out related programs, functions, or research. These included the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the Economic Research Service (ERS), Department of Agriculture; the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior; the Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army; and the Water Resources Council. We also contacted the Office of Management and Budget.

We reviewed a report issued by the Commission on Rural Water, which was formed by the National Demonstration Water Project with grant funds obtained from the Office of Economic Opportunity to coordinate the project and to serve as the recognized center of competence for improving the national

delivery system for rural water supply and wastewater disposal. We reviewed inventories of public sewage and water systems taken in 1962 and 1963, respectively, by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). HEW was responsible for Federal water quality and water pollution activities until they were transferred to the Department of the Interior in May 1966 and eventually to EPA.

We requested each of the agencies and commissions to advise us of data available on the need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems in rural areas of the Nation as a whole or for specific geographical areas. We discussed the data with agency officials and reviewed the data to determine its nature, scope, reliability, and usefulness.

For our survey we defined a "rural area" as any area not in a city or town with a population exceeding 10,000. This definition is stated in section 109 of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 1926 (supp. II)) as a criterion for obtaining an FHA loan or grant for constructing water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems.

#### PRINCIPAL FEDERAL PROGRAMS RELATED TO WATER, SEWAGE, AND SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS IN RURAL AREAS

Several Federal agencies or commissions administer programs under which rural residents can obtain financial assistance for constructing water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems; however, FHA administers the only program aimed specifically at rural areas. It is not uncommon for two or more agencies to jointly finance a system.

To minimize competition between programs and to better coordinate them, some interagency agreements have been made whereby one Federal agency will refer applicants to another when its own funding is not available or when the applicant does not qualify for its assistance but may qualify under another agency's program. A brief description of these programs follows.

#### Farmers Home Administration

FHA is the primary Federal agency responsible for helping rural residents obtain new or improved water, sewage,

and solid waste disposal systems. Section 306 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act<sup>1</sup> (7 U.S.C. 1926) authorizes FHA to make grants and loans or to insure loans for the installation, repair, improvement, or expansion of such systems. Public or quasi-public bodies and corporations not operated for profit are eligible for assistance, provided the projects will serve residents of a rural area.

### Environmental Protection Agency

Pursuant to title II of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1281 et seq. (supp. II)), EPA is authorized to make project grants to municipal, intermunicipal, State, or interstate agencies to finance 75 percent of the cost of constructing municipal sewage systems. Such systems may serve all or part of a community, metropolitan area, or region. Also, sections 204, 205, and 208 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 3251 et seq.), authorize EPA to make project grants--of up to 75 percent of the construction cost--to municipal, intermunicipal, State, or interstate agencies to help finance the construction of demonstration projects, to determine the feasibility of new techniques of solid waste management and to serve as models for other communities.

### Economic Development Administration

The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. 3131, 3141), authorizes EDA to make grants and loans for such public facilities as water and sewage systems when they are needed to initiate and encourage long-term economic growth in designated areas where it is lagging. States and local subdivisions of States, Indian tribes, and private or public nonprofit organizations or associations representing a development area or a designated economic development center are eligible to receive grants and long-term, low-interest-rate loans. Grants may be made for up to 50 percent of project cost. Supplementary grants can bring the Federal share up to 80 percent for severely depressed areas and up to 100 percent for designated Indian reservations.

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<sup>1</sup>Referred to as the Consolidated Farmers Home Administration Act of 1961 before its amendment by the Rural Development Act of 1972.

## Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Housing Amendments of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1492), authorize HUD to make loans to cities, towns, villages, counties, special-purpose districts, or Indian tribes to construct a variety of public works projects, including water and sewage systems. The applicant must have a population under 50,000, unless it is located within a designated redevelopment area where the limit is 150,000.

The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. 3102), authorizes HUD to make grants to cities, towns, counties, Indian tribes, and public agencies or instrumentalities of one or more States to construct water systems, sewage-collection lines, and storm-sewer systems. Generally, grants shall not exceed 50 percent of land and construction costs except that, under certain circumstances, a grant up to 90 percent can be made to a community with a population of less than 10,000.

### Regional commissions

The Appalachian Regional Commission, which covers designated counties in 13 States (see appendix), may make project grants to States, public bodies, and private non-profit agencies to supplement any Federal grant-in-aid program authorized before December 31, 1974. The supplemental grant can be used to bring the Federal share of a project for acquiring and constructing facilities--including water, sewer, and solid waste disposal facilities--up to 80 percent of the project cost. This program was authorized by the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, as amended (40 U.S.C. App. 214).

The seven multi-State regional commissions (see appendix) established pursuant to the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 can also make supplemental project grants to States, political subdivisions, or private or public nonprofit organizations within their regions to take maximum advantage of Federal grant-in-aid programs for constructing or equipping of facilities--including water, sewer, and solid waste disposal facilities--or for acquiring land for such facilities. Total Federal assistance, including the commission grants, cannot exceed 80 percent of eligible cost.

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The data available from these agencies and commissions and others on the need for water and waste disposal systems in rural areas is presented in the following sections.

INFORMATION ON THE NEED FOR WATER, SEWAGE,  
AND SOLID WASTE SYSTEMS IN RURAL AREAS

Some agencies and commissions had data on the need for water and sewage systems in certain rural areas but it did not represent the overall needs in all rural areas. None of the agencies had meaningful data on the need for solid waste disposal systems. The data available on water and sewage needs could not be combined because:

- The agencies had developed it for different periods or had used different guidelines and standards on what constituted need for new or improved systems.
- In some instances it overlapped; excluded some rural areas, included some nonrural areas, or was otherwise limited in scope; or was outdated.

The data available is described below.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

In 1962 and 1963 HEW took inventories of existing municipal sewage and water facilities, respectively. The inventories showed only those communities having public sewage and water facilities; they did not identify the communities needing new or improved systems.

Economic Research Service

In 1968 ERS used HEW's 1963 water facilities inventory, census data, and a road atlas to identify communities without public water facilities. For its study ERS defined a "community" as a centrally built-up section of an area with over 25 people.

ERS concluded that, as of the beginning of 1963, 34,794 communities with over 25 people--62 percent of all such communities--were without public water facilities. Only 31 of the communities without such facilities had populations over 5,500. The study showed also that between 1963 and 1967 Federal agencies--chiefly FHA--approved 569 loans, 355 grants, and 356 combined loans and grants for water projects.

Using HEW's 1962 inventory of public sewage facilities, ERS noted also that 44,709 communities--nearly 80 percent of all communities with more than 25 people--lacked public sewage facilities. Only 4 percent of the communities without such facilities had populations over 1,000. The study showed that between 1962 and 1967 Federal agencies approved 14 loans, 649 grants, and 191 combined loans and grants for public sewage projects.

Although at the time the ERS study was made, ERS provided some insight into the need for public water and sewage facilities in communities, it was not complete because:

--ERS did not determine the adequacy of (1) individual water and sewage facilities--septic tanks, cesspools, or outside privies and wells or springs--serving residents in communities without public systems or (2) existing public systems, some of which may have needed replacement or improvement because of deterioration of the system or expansion of the community.

--ERS did not include communities with 25 people or less.

Also the information is now outdated.

The Commission on Rural Water in its March 1973 report, "Water and Wastewater Problems in Rural America,"<sup>1</sup> also made the points that (1) the ERS study did not attempt to estimate the inadequacies of existing community water and sewage systems and (2) although the ERS study showed an increasing number of water and sewage facilities in the Nation, there were still gaps because an estimated 58,000 communities with fewer than 26 people were not covered.

#### Farmers Home Administration

In 1969 FHA county offices made a survey of community and individual water and waste facilities in communities with

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<sup>1</sup>This report was inserted on pages 259 to 290 in the hearings before the Subcommittee on Public Health and Environment, House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, on H.R. 5368, H.R. 1059, H.R. 5345, and H.R. 5395, Safe Drinking Water Act--1973, 93d Cong., 1st sess.

populations below 5,500. FHA defined a "community" as an area which should be served by a central system. In 1970 FHA studied selected communities to determine if they were "bedroom" communities near cities, if water and sewage facilities were adequate, and if there were offsite pollution problems. The survey results--inserted in the Congressional Record<sup>1</sup> in July 1970--were summarized as follows in the Commission on Rural Water's March 1973 report.

Rural Water and Sewer Needs 1969-70

	<u>Water</u>	<u>Sewer</u>
Communities needing assistance:		
Communities without, but needing, a central system	17,476	23,356
Communities with central systems needing improve- ments or enlargements	<u>14,267</u>	<u>6,823</u>
Total	<u>31,743</u>	<u>30,179</u>
Households needing assist- ance:		
Households in communi- ties without central systems	1,645,605	2,753,601
Households in communi- ties with systems need- ing improvements or enlargements	<u>957,400</u>	<u>822,053</u>
Total	<u>2,603,005</u>	<u>3,575,654</u>
Estimated cost of providing needed facilities	<u>\$4,161,513,000</u>	<u>\$7,121,767,000</u>

In developing its survey data, FHA considered a community's central water system adequate if there were no plans to improve or enlarge the system and if the system provided an adequate quantity of good water with adequate pressure to as many families as feasible. FHA considered a central sewage system

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<sup>1</sup>116 Congressional Record E22866.

adequate if the treatment plant had adequate capacity to meet current needs and if the residents did not plan to enlarge or improve the system. FHA considered a system as needing improvement if, for example, larger lines to increase water pressure, additional storage capacity, a more dependable source of water, or an enlarged waste treatment capacity were needed.

For those communities without central systems, FHA surveyed the adequacy of individual systems. FHA considered an individual water system adequate if it was fully capable of meeting the needs of the individual family, produced water meeting acceptable health standards, and did not require excessive maintenance and operating costs. FHA considered an individual sewage system adequate if it worked satisfactorily and if it provided the family with adequate sanitary sewage disposal without excessive maintenance and operating costs.

FHA's standards for determining the adequacy of existing systems or the need for new or improved systems, however, were too general to insure a consistent evaluation of community needs by all of FHA's State and county offices. FHA had not established uniform standards defining adequate water pressure, adequate quantity of good water, adequate plant treatment capacity, and acceptable health standards nor did its standards consider sewage treatment effluents and related pollution standards.

The current usefulness of FHA's survey data is questionable. FHA has not updated the data for the construction of new systems, the deterioration of existing systems, or the need for new or improved systems resulting from the growth of existing communities or from the development of new ones. The survey did not cover rural communities with populations over 5,500 because, at that time, FHA did not have authority to make loans or grants to communities with larger populations. The Rural Development Act of 1972, however, increased the size of communities eligible for FHA assistance to those with populations of 10,000 or less.

In its March 1973 report, the Commission on Rural Water stated that the FHA survey did not give a complete picture of the water and sewage situation in rural areas because FHA's definition of a community obviously excluded areas where FHA considered a central system (1) unnecessary, probably because

individual facilities were considered adequate, or (2) unsuitable, because houses were too scattered. The Commission believed these exemptions covered a substantial number of rural residents because there was no agreed-upon definition of either "adequate" or "unsuitable."

The Commission stated that, if the number of communities receiving Federal loans for water projects between 1963 and 1971--something over 5,000--were subtracted from the approximately 35,000 communities with populations between 25 and 5,500 that, according to the ERS study, lacked public water facilities in 1963, there were remaining in 1971 roughly 30,000 communities which had no public water facilities. The Commission stated that FHA's study listed only about 17,000 communities without any kind of community system, indicating that FHA considered public water systems for some 13,000 communities either unnecessary or unsuitable.

The Commission noted that a similar situation existed concerning the need for sewage systems in that the ERS study showed 44,000 communities needing public sewage facilities in 1963, but FHA only showed 23,000 such communities in 1970.

#### Environmental Protection Agency

EPA received annual reports from each State which listed those sewage treatment facilities which the State intended to fund during the succeeding 5 fiscal years. The most recent reports, listing funds for fiscal years 1972 through 1976, did not show the States' total needs since they excluded those communities in which the States did not intend to fund treatment facilities.

In 1971 EPA made a survey which showed the need for sewage treatment facilities and the estimated cost of providing them. The survey, however, covered communities with populations exceeding 10,000 which, under the definition provided in the Rural Development Act of 1972 and for the purpose of our survey, are classified as nonrural.

Using the 1971 survey data and the States' annual reports on projects to be funded, EPA developed a cost estimate of the States' needs for sewage treatment facilities. Pursuant to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, EPA used these cost estimates to determine the allocation of grant funds to the States for fiscal years 1973 and 1974.

EPA stores all of its data in a central computer. State, interstate, and local water pollution control agencies have access to the computer data for updating and retrieving water quality and pollution control data. An EPA official told us that he did not have much faith in some of the computer data because the States supplying the data were understaffed and were sometimes unable to update the data when changes occurred. EPA told us that the computer data relating specifically to rural communities would be difficult to identify because many small communities are suburbs in metropolitan areas.

EPA's data covered only sewage treatment facilities because, before the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, EPA was not authorized to aid in financing the construction of sewage-collection lines, or the correction of infiltration problems or sewage and storm-sewer overflow problems. EPA's current efforts to obtain needs data are discussed beginning on page 13.

#### Regional commissions

Four of the seven regional commissions established pursuant to the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 had data covering varying time periods showing the aggregate dollars needed for community facilities, including water and waste disposal systems, in their regions. One of the four commissions had separate data for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems showing for each the total funding needed within the region for 5 years.

The four commissions' data covered both urban and rural areas and could not be separated. However, some commission officials told us that more specific data was available from the States in their regions.

The Appalachian Regional Commission had some data on needs for water and sewer systems in several Appalachian counties in North and South Carolina. However, the data not only was limited in scope but was obtained in 1967 and had not been updated.

#### Department of Housing and Urban Development

HUD advised us that the last study it had undertaken on overall water and sewer requirements was completed in

December 1966 as part of a larger study entitled "State and Local Public Facility Needs and Financing" prepared for the Subcommittee on Economic Progress of the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress. HUD said that this study was obviously out of date and that it did not differentiate between rural and urban requirements.

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None of the other Federal agencies or commissions we contacted had developed data during the past 5 years which showed the need for water and waste disposal systems for rural areas or for specific geographical rural areas.

CURRENT, PLANNED, AND PROPOSED EFFORTS  
TO OBTAIN DATA ON THE NEED FOR  
WATER AND WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS  
IN RURAL AREAS

EPA and the Water Resources Council had efforts underway to obtain certain nationwide or regional data on the need for water or sewage systems; and the Department of Agriculture plans a survey of need for rural water and waste disposal systems, as authorized by the Rural Development Act of 1972. Two bills currently before the Congress would require EPA to survey the need for rural water supplies and systems.

Current efforts

EPA is involved in a nationwide effort to update its information on the need for sewage systems. Pursuant to section 516(b) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1375 (supp. II)), the Administrator, in cooperation with the States and water pollution control agencies, is required to make (1) a detailed estimate, to be biennially revised, of the cost of constructing all needed publicly owned sewage systems in all the States, (2) a comprehensive study of the economic impact on affected units of government of the cost of installing treatment facilities, and (3) a comprehensive analysis of the national requirements for and the cost of treating municipal, industrial, and other effluent to attain the water quality objectives as established by the act or applicable State law.

As of October 10, 1973, the needs survey and cost estimates were being finalized. The survey will provide information on the need for sewage systems by size of community, and the cost estimates will be used to allocate water pollution control grant funds for fiscal years 1975 and 1976.

Through Federal and State agencies the Water Resources Council is, or will be, conducting several levels of studies on water and related land resources in each of the Nation's major river basins. The Council's first and broadest level of planning is framework studies and assessments based on the needs and desires of people for the conservation, development, and use of water and related land resources and

includes the identification of regions with complex problems requiring more detailed investigation and analysis.

A Council official told us that rural water supplies would be one of the major problem areas to be addressed by the Council's 1975 assessment. He stated that this assessment would consist of a survey on problems and needs with regional, State, and local participants being requested to identify areas of severe rural water supply deficiencies. A subsequent survey will be conducted as part of the assessment to determine the magnitude of the deficiency and the causes, such as shortage of water supplies or lack of distribution facilities. The assessment will not, however, determine the cost of correcting the deficiencies.

The Council official told us also that the assessment would relate the severity of the rural domestic water supply problem to other water problems both within each geographical area and among geographical areas from a national viewpoint.

Because the Council's 1975 assessment will be aimed primarily at identifying only those areas with severe rural water supply deficiencies, it appears that the Council's efforts will not provide information on the overall need for water systems in rural areas.

#### Planned efforts

Under section 603(b) of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 2204 (supp. II)), the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to initiate or expand research and development efforts related to solving problems of rural water supply, rural sewage, and solid waste management. And, under section 302 of the act (7 U.S.C. 1010a (supp. II)), the Secretary is directed to carry out, and report in not less than 5-year intervals on, a land inventory and monitoring program to include studies and surveys of degradation of the environment resulting from improper use of soil, water, and related resources.

An Agriculture official told us that a survey on needs under section 603(b) of the act would be initiated sometime after fiscal year 1974. An SCS official told us that SCS, which has leadership responsibility within Agriculture for executing the provisions of section 302, did not plan to

conduct a survey of rural water, sewage, and solid waste disposal needs in connection with the land inventory and monitoring program.

Proposed efforts

At least seven bills<sup>1</sup> proposing a Safe Drinking Water Act have been introduced in the 93d Congress. Two of these seven bills (S.433 and H.R. 9726), would require EPA to make a survey to determine the quantity, quality, and availability of rural drinking water supplies. Also, the proposed Rural Drinking Water Assistance Act (H.R. 5541) would require the Secretary of Agriculture, in cooperation with EPA, to conduct a rural water survey to determine the estimated number of residents (1) not presently served by a publicly or privately owned water distribution system or by an individual home well, (2) inadequately served by such a water distribution system, and (3) experiencing, or likely to experience, impairment of health due to the absence or inadequacy of such a water distribution system. These bills were referred to either the Senate Committee on Commerce or the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce.

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<sup>1</sup>S. 433, S. 1735, H.R. 1059, H.R. 5345, H.R. 5368, H.R. 5395, and H.R. 9726.

## LACK OF STANDARDS FOR EVALUATING THE NEED FOR WATER AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS

The Commission on Rural Water stated in its 1973 report that no national standard in the area of water and waste water disposal had ever been clearly enunciated. It suggested that, as a standard, water and sewage disposal for everyone should be plentiful, sanitary, and convenient and that this standard was capable of being translated into workable guidelines. The Commission explained that "plentiful" could be defined as the amount of water used by average families, "sanitary" water and sewage disposal could be defined by existing national drinking water and waste water standards, and "convenience" could be defined by the presence of working plumbing facilities in the home. The Commission believed that, if this standard was acceptable as a goal, it would then be necessary to survey existing water supplies and waste disposal methods to see how closely they matched the standard considering both the quantity and quality of the facilities.

EPA and the States are developing new standards governing sewage treatment. However, the only national standards for the quality of drinking water are EPA's Drinking Water Standards which govern interstate water carriers. Legislation pending in the 93d Congress (such as H.R. 1059 and S. 433 which propose a Safe Drinking Water Act), would require EPA to establish national primary drinking water regulations applicable to each public water system in each State. This proposed legislation also would authorize EPA to conduct research, studies, and demonstrations or to render financial or other assistance to any person in the conduct of research and studies relating to the causes, diagnosis, treatment, control and prevention of diseases resulting from contaminants in drinking water; and to periodically revise its primary drinking water standards.

## CONCLUSIONS

Data, which is not now available, on the need for water, sewage, and solid waste disposal systems in rural areas could be useful to Federal agencies and to congressional committees in establishing long- and short-range goals, setting funding priorities, supporting and reviewing annual budget requests, and measuring progress. However, to obtain data useful to all interested parties, a unified effort by all the

agencies having program responsibilities in rural areas would be needed to avoid duplication and to minimize the cost of obtaining the data.

Such an effort should be planned carefully to insure that the following important matters, among others, are considered.

- The specific data needs of each cognizant agency or congressional committee.
- The extent that data already available or being obtained meets or will meet those specific needs.
- Selecting the most desirable method or methods for gathering the needed data, including the agency or agencies most suited to gathering it; the degree of accuracy desired; and the economic feasibility of obtaining it.
- Establishing, for use in gathering the data, clear guidelines and standards on what constitutes need for new or improved water, sewage, and solid waste disposal facilities.

In commenting on matters discussed in this report, HUD concurred in our suggestion that, if a study were determined necessary to obtain data on the need for water, sewer, and solid waste disposal systems in rural areas, the study should be a unified effort of all the agencies which have program responsibilities in rural areas.

The Department of Agriculture stated that

- the report covered an urgent matter;
- one of the difficulties in obtaining data on the need for water and waste disposal systems was the absence of uniform or measurable standards for assessing the adequacy of the facilities or services;
- standards should be given special emphasis because they are vital for better evaluating needs, especially on a national scale; and
- it looked forward to the opportunity of cooperating in any effort to obtain or develop better data.





