



NOVEMBER 13, 1998

**CLEAN WATER ACTION PLAN  
FEDERAL MULTI-AGENCY SOURCE WATER AGREEMENT**

**INTEGRATION OF STATE, TRIBAL AND LOCAL DRINKING WATER  
SOURCE  
ASSESSMENT AND PROTECTION INITIATIVES  
WITHIN A WATERSHED FRAMEWORK**

**I. BACKGROUND**

**The Clean Water Action Plan**

The President's *Clean Water Action Plan* (CWAP) provides a blueprint for a cooperative approach to restoring and protecting water quality. Under this approach, state, federal, tribal, regional, and local governments, as well as private partners, will work collaboratively to focus resources and implement effective strategies for protecting and restoring watersheds identified by states and tribes as priorities through unified watershed assessments. A key element of the *Action Plan* is the integration of public health and aquatic ecosystem goals when identifying priorities for watershed restoration and protection. To facilitate the development of a comprehensive framework, the CWAP asks federal agencies to enter into an agreement for "directing program authorities, technical assistance, data and enforcement resources to help states, tribes and local communities design and implement their drinking water source assessment and protection programs" within an integrated watershed framework and to "draw on program authorities under relevant laws to assign priority to drinking water source areas needing protection" (*Action Plan*, Action #15, page 29).

The undersigned federal agencies are entering into this agreement to affirm their interest in federal, state, tribal and local partnerships that support state and tribal government efforts to complete drinking water source assessments nationwide and support source water protection programs with the primary goal of protecting the nation's drinking water.

## **The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments Drinking Water Source Assessment Provisions**

Section 1453 of the Safe Drinking Water Act as amended in 1996, requires all states to complete assessments of their public drinking water supplies. By 2003, each state and participating tribe<sup>1</sup> will delineate the boundaries of areas in the state (or on tribal lands) that supply water for each public drinking water system, identify significant potential sources of contamination, and determine how susceptible each system is to sources of contamination. These drinking water source protection areas for which assessments are required include federal lands that support non-federally-owned public water systems as well as non-federal lands that support federally-owned public water systems. The assessments will synthesize existing information about the sources of each drinking water supply, to provide a national baseline on the potential contaminant threats and help guide future watershed restoration and protection. States have received FY1997 Federal Drinking Water State Revolving Fund set-aside funds to complete drinking water source assessments.

### **Benefits Of Federal Cooperation**

The Safe Drinking Water Act directs the states to use all available data, including federal information. Many federal agencies have general information on water quality and surface and ground water hydrology as well as specific information on watersheds or aquifers, and federally-owned public water supplies. Federal agencies can help the states and tribes complete mandated drinking water source assessments by providing, within the confines of their limited resources and authorities, technical expertise and copies of existing information on drinking water source protection areas collected under other statutes or initiatives that involved water quality assessment and protection efforts. This data could supply much of what is required for certain drinking water source assessments.

State and tribal drinking water source assessments, when completed, will provide additional input for water resource protection efforts of federal agencies and enable such agencies to direct education, research, remediation, and protection programs to highest priority source waters. Additionally, state and tribal information on source water quality will help guide federal agency decisions regarding placement and construction of new facilities.

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<sup>1</sup>Tribes are not statutorily required to complete assessments of their drinking water systems. However U.S. EPA strongly encourages tribes to complete drinking water source assessments and implement protection measures as necessary. EPA and others will work to increase awareness among tribes of the drinking water source assessment and protection initiatives and the technical and financial assistance available to tribes.

## **II. GOALS**

In keeping with the spirit of the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 and the President's Clean Water Action Plan, the goals of this agreement are:

A. To encourage field and regional offices of the undersigned agencies to continue with existing or enter into new partnerships with states, tribes, and local communities nationwide as a means of directing technical assistance to such partners in the development and implementation of their drinking water source assessment and protection activities.

B. To increase general awareness among federal entities of how existing, ongoing water quality research, monitoring, data, and management plans relate to state, tribal, regional and local drinking water source assessment and protection activities. The attached "On-going Federal Initiatives and Project Expansions in Support of Drinking Water Source Assessment and Protection" highlights many ongoing and new source water-related initiatives by the undersigned federal agencies.

C. To encourage field and regional offices of the undersigned federal agencies to use the results of state and tribal drinking water source assessments when developing relevant natural resource, technical assistance, facility management plans and water resource plans.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

***A. Directing Technical Assistance.*** Within each of their missions, budgeted resources, and legal authority, the undersigned federal agencies agree to, but are not limited to the following objectives, as they partner with states, tribes and local communities in the development of drinking water source assessment and protection programs:

- (1) Streamlining accessibility of existing relevant data.
- (2) Sharing or assisting in development of assessment methodologies, including QA and QC procedures. (Past water quality assessment methodologies developed through unified watershed assessments, total maximum daily load assessments, national water quality inventorying, and water quality monitoring, may prove useful to states and tribes).
- (3) Cooperating in the completion of drinking water source assessments for federally-owned systems and inventories on federal lands and facilities within drinking water source protection areas.
- (4) Encouraging federal liaisons at the field or regional level with state and local technical and/or citizen's advisory committees.
- (5) Incorporating drinking water source assessment and protection into federal drinking water quality education efforts and outreach materials.

***B. Assigning Priority to Drinking Water Areas Identified as Needing Protection.*** Within each of their missions, budgets, and legal authority, the undersigned federal agencies will make use of the tribal and state drinking water source assessment results by:

(1) Considering state, tribal, and local drinking water source protection priorities when developing management plans for federal lands and facilities, including decisions regarding placement and construction of new facilities.

(2) Examining how state, tribal, and local drinking water source protection concerns may be incorporated into existing and new regional and field level watershed research, management and outreach activities, such as those associated with the state and tribal unified watershed assessments, and collaborating where appropriate.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION**

Within each of their missions, budgeted resources and legal authorities, the undersigned federal agencies will implement this agreement consistent with the attached Implementation Plan (Attachment A). This plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary. This plan includes steps to:

- Facilitate Regional and Field Office Planning for Agreement Implementation
- Improve Accessibility to Source Water-Related Federal Data
- Coordinate Drinking Water Source Assessment and Protection Efforts with Unified Watershed Assessments and Other Related CWAP Action Items
- Measure Performance of Agreement Implementation.

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