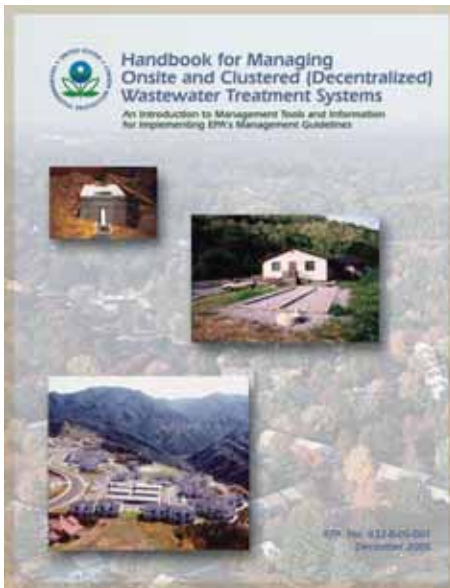


rural developments



News and resources from the Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Decentralized Wastewater Management E-Handbook now available



The EPA Office of Wastewater Management has recently expanded its *Handbook for Managing Onsite and Clustered (Decentralized) Wastewater Treatment Systems* with the addition of an "E-Handbook."

The E-Handbook features resource guides containing detailed information on the 13 management program elements featured in the existing management handbook: public education, planning, performance, site evaluation, design, construction/installation, operation/maintenance, inspections/monitoring, residuals management, training/certification, financial assistance,

inventory/recordkeeping, and compliance assurance.

The E-Handbook focuses on individual and clustered wastewater systems that discharge to the soil, but the information can also be applied to small systems that discharge to surface waters through federal or state National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit programs.

The E-Handbook is intended for health departments, wastewater system management entities, local governments, and other organizations involved in managing multiple, individual, or clustered treatment systems.

Each resource guide contains detailed information regarding each program element topic and links to other resources, case studies, and examples of successful management programs.

Resource guides in the E-Handbook are at http://cfpub.epa.gov/owm/septic/septic.cfm?page_id=289

Main guide is at www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/onsite_handbook.pdf

EPA's Semiannual Regulatory Agenda available

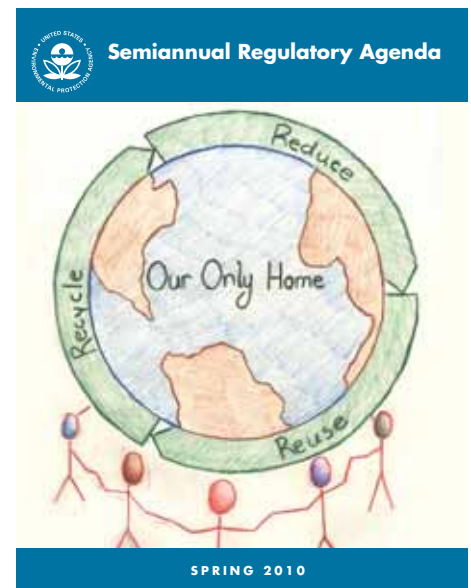
Twice a year, a number of federal agencies combine efforts to publish a comprehensive report describing regulations currently under development or recently completed. These reports are bundled together and published as the Unified Agenda. Each

agency's contribution is called a Regulatory Agenda. Once a year, a Regulatory Plan is released along with the Unified Agenda. The Environmental Protection Agency contributes to each publication. You can access EPA's Semiannual Regulatory Agenda and Annual Regulatory Plan in three ways:

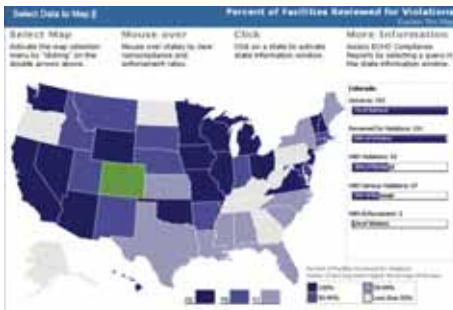
- Download EPA's Agenda and Plan books at www.epa.gov/lawsregs/search/regagenda.html
- Search RegInfo.gov
- Search Regulations.gov

EPA's Semiannual Regulatory Agenda describes a broad universe of regulatory activities under development or review. Included are regulations and certain major policy documents.

Want to know more about what EPA's Regulatory Plan and Agenda are? Do you wonder why there are different ways to access the Plan and Agenda? Read the Background section at www.epa.gov/lawsregs/search/regagenda.html (bottom of page).



EPA launches new web tools to inform the public about clean water enforcement



Interactive web tool allows the public to check water violations in their communities

WASHINGTON (EPA) – The Environmental Protection Agency is launching a new set of web tools, data and interactive maps to inform the public about serious Clean Water Act violations in their communities. Improving water quality is one of EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson's priorities, and in 2009, Jackson directed the agency to develop concrete steps to improve water quality, to better enforce the Clean Water Act, and to use 21st century technology to transform the collection, use and availability of EPA data. The web tools are part of EPA's Clean Water Act Action Plan, to work with states in ensuring that facilities comply with standards that keep water clean.

"EPA is taking another important step to increase transparency and keep Americans informed about the safety of their local waters," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Making this information more accessible and understandable empowers millions of people to press for better compliance and enforcement in their communities."

The new web page provides interactive information from EPA's 2008 Annual Noncompliance Report, which pertains to about 40,000 permitted Clean Water Act dischargers across the country. The report



Letter to the editor

I receive my own copy of *Rural Matters* and have shared this great information with my fellow members of the Town of Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission. All nine members would like to have their own copy. We have just finished the study and adoption of our Open Space Plan for the town and will be taking the issue of wetland protection. Meanwhile, the town's planning board is reviewing our comprehensive plan. Between the two commissions, *Rural Matters* Issue 2/6 made an impact. We are discussing a letter to the town board asking for "prohibiting the mining of water for sale." The current issue gave us much to think about.

Sandra Thorpe,
Member of the Town of Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission
via e-mail

Send letters to ruralmatters@rcap.org

lists a state-by-state summary data of violations and enforcement responses taken by the states for smaller facilities. The new web page also makes it easy to compare states by compliance rates and enforcement actions taken and provides access to updated State Review Framework (SRF) reports.

Interactive Map for Clean Water Act Annual Noncompliance Report:
www.epa-echo.gov/echo/ancr/us

State Review Framework: www.epa.gov/compliance/state/srf/index.html

Enforcement and Compliance History Online: www.epa-echo.gov/echo

EPA seeks citizen participation with Open Government Plan

WASHINGTON (EPA) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has published the first edition of its Open Government Plan. The plan discusses publishing EPA information online, improving the quality of the information, and creating a culture of open government.

The plan is in response to President Barack Obama's Open Government Directive, which outlines a plan for breaking down the barriers between the federal government and the public. Federal departments and agencies are putting forward concrete



plans for making operations and data more transparent and expanding opportunities for citizen participation, collaboration, and oversight. These steps will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and productivity across the government.

"EPA is very focused on ensuring public access and participation in our activities," said Linda Travers, principal deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Environmental Information. "With our new plan, we're not only meeting the objectives of the directive, but we're also building on our culture of promoting openness."

EPA's flagship initiative, Community Engagement, is an over-arching theme that focuses on reaching out to disadvantaged

communities, expanding public awareness of the rulemaking process, and improving access to environmental information through the development of mobile applications. The agency is focused on working with communities in innovative ways, with the goal of sharing the most effective practices and lessons learned for future efforts.

To address public comments and suggestions, EPA will continue the conversation in a series of blog posts for discussion on the plan and with a video town hall meeting in early summer 2010. EPA plans to review its Open Government Plan every six months as suggestions come in from the public.

More information on Open Government: www.epa.gov/open

More information on making public comments: www.openepa.ideascale.com

Revised guidance for the Public Notification (PN) Rule now available

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has revised and released three guidance documents for the Public Notification (PN) Rule:

- the Revised State Implementation Guidance for the Public Notification (PN) Rule
- the Revised Public Notification Handbook
- the Revised Public Notification Handbook for Transient Noncommunity Systems

These documents provide implementation guidance to assist EPA Regions and states in exercising primary enforcement responsibility (primacy) under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). They also offer guidance to aid public drinking water systems in complying with the Public Notification (PN) Rule.

Access these documents on EPA's website: www.epa.gov/safewater/publicnotification/compliancehelp.html

Hard copies are also available at the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP). Call NSCEP at 800/490-9198 and refer to document numbers EPA 816-R-09-012, EPA 816-R-09-013, and EPA 816-R-09-009, respectively. ■

President Obama urges Americans to take action in Earth Day challenge

On Earth Day, President Barack Obama challenged Americans to take action in their homes, communities, schools and businesses to improve the environment in honor of the 40th Anniversary of the holiday, which occurred on April 22. In conjunction with a video message from Obama, the White House unveiled WhiteHouse.gov/EarthDay as a resource guide to promote the fundamentals of Earth Day throughout the year.

The site offers a range of tips on how citizens can make green changes in various aspects of their daily lives, from the home to the workplace to the community. Educational materials and volunteer opportunities are also prominently featured on the new site.

In his video message, Obama invites Americans to renew their individual dedication to a healthier environment: "But even though we've made significant progress, there is much more to do. And as we continue to tackle our environmental challenges, it's clear that change won't come from Washington alone. It will come from Americans across the country who take steps in their own homes and their own communities to make that change happen."

For more on the 40th anniversary of Earth Day and to view Obama's full video message, visit www.WhiteHouse.gov/earthday

New Appointments



New CEO for Midwest Assistance Program and new RCAP board member

Marcie McLaughlin began as the new CEO of Midwest Assistance Program (MAP), the Midwest RCAP, in June. As the head of one of RCAP's six regional partners, she will also sit on RCAP's national board of directors.

McLaughlin is a policy expert with 22 years of experience at the local, state and federal levels, working on key issues affecting rural communities.

She most recently served as Director of Constituent Relations for the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) in Washington, D.C. RUPRI conducts research and facilitates public dialogue to assist policymakers in understanding the impact their programs have on rural communities.

She also served as the founding Executive Director of Minnesota Rural Partners, the state's rural development council, and as the Renville County (Minn.) Commissioner. Her first work in rural community development was writing and managing comprehensive water plans for six Minnesota counties in the early 1990s.

With headquarters in New Prague, Minn., MAP's territory covers nine states. McLaughlin is originally from Minnesota.



**AWWA names
David LaFrance new
Executive Director**

David B. LaFrance began as the new Executive Director of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) on May 3. AWWA has more than 60,000 members worldwide and shares knowledge on water resource development, water and wastewater treatment technology, water storage and distribution, and utility management and operations.

AWWA and RCAP committed to collaborate with the signing of a memorandum of understanding in March 2009 with the goals of: cooperating and communicating at the national level and fostering the development of local-level communications; exploring cooperation on joint projects and/or programs; collaborating on the advancement of the industry.

LaFrance, 46, previously served as Director of Finance for Denver Water for 12 years and is an industry leader in the areas of utility economics and water rates. He served as chairman of AWWA's Audit Committee from 2005 to 2008 and its Rates and Charges Subcommittee from 1993 to 2002.

"I look forward to working with AWWA volunteer leaders and staff in fulfilling our mission to protect public health and to provide safe and sufficient water for all," said LaFrance.

Prior to being named Director of Finance in 1998, LaFrance served as Denver Water's Manager of Rate Administration for five years. From 1988 to 1993, he worked as a utility rate economist with the global engineering and consulting firm CH2M Hill in Denver and Portland, Ore., and from 1986-88 he was a natural resources economist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Portland.

LaFrance earned an MBA in finance from the University of Colorado, Denver in 1992 and a B.S. in economics from Lewis and Clark College in Portland in 1986. ■

community profile

Rural revitalization in Donaldson, Minn.



Where: Donaldson, Minn., located in the northwest portion of the state along the Red River Valley

Problem: Untreated sewage discharged into a municipal storm water system which emptied into a highway ditch; rundown housing structures full of vermin

Solution: An affordable pressurized collection system with an extended aeration system for treatment; treated wastewater would return to the ground via a subsurface, rock-bed drain field

The decline of an agricultural economy and the exodus from small towns has left behind dilapidated houses and empty commercial buildings in Donaldson, Minn. With a population of only 57 people and an annual city operating budget of less than \$15,000, the city was at a loss to determine how to eliminate two serious public health hazards – untreated sewage that was being discharged to a road ditch and a half-dozen rundown housing structures infested with vermin.

A municipal storm water system, built in 1936, discharged to a highway ditch west of town. Septic systems installed for indoor plumbing in the 1950s and 1960s let the effluent discharge directly into the city storm water system. A high water table and tight clay soils made drain fields a very expensive option, and they typically performed poorly. The existing system, although effective in getting the wastewater out of town, created a public health violation with untreated sewage draining down the highway ditch.

In addition to the costs of constructing a new wastewater system, the city faced penalties and fines from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The city council also identified six properties that were in severe stages of neglect. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Minnesota Rural Development office (RD) asked for assistance from the Midwest Assistance Program (MAP), Midwest RCAP, to provide technical assistance to the community to correct its wastewater problem.

MAP took steps to rehabilitate the public health threats caused by the untreated sewage by:

- Providing technical assistance to the community to correct its wastewater problem
- Helping the community hire an engineering firm to draft and implement an affordable system
- Assisting in keeping the project on track and within budget by preparing the environmental review and application materials
- Identifying funding for community revitalization
- Helping Donaldson apply to the Minnesota Housing Finance Authority for a \$74,600 grant to acquire and improve several properties that were a public nuisance
- Organizing other entities such as the Stephen Fire Department, the Lions Club, and the local 4-H club to work in partnership to clean up the town

After receiving the first half of the grant money, the council knew that this summer, the town's children would be safer and that some of the signs of a depressed farm economy would be removed. MAP assisted Donaldson in developing the capacity to help itself and to identify affordable solutions to meet its needs. Changes in the market-driven agricultural economy will still affect Donaldson, but the community now has a safe environment with amenities that are affordable for the residents. ■