

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5962-9]

Information for States on Recommended Operator Certification Requirements**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency.**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In this document, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the public availability of EPA 816-R-98-001, "Information for States on Recommended Operator Certification Requirements."

Section 1420(d)(2) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended in 1996, requires EPA, through a partnership with States, public water systems, and the public, to develop information for States on recommended operator certification requirements. EPA is required to publish this information by February 6, 1998. Consistent with these statutory requirements, the EPA appointed such a work group (the Partnership), under the general provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-423), to provide advice on matters relating to operator certification. The Partnership held formal meetings in March, June, August, and September of 1997. These meetings were advertised in the **Federal Register** and were open to the public. The "Information for States on Recommended Operator Certification Requirements," as developed by the Partnership, consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 contains a summary of the existing State operator certification programs. Chapter 2 contains excerpts from the National Research Council's book entitled *Safe Water From Every Tap* including the Executive Summary and Chapter 6—Training Operators for Small Systems. Chapter 3 contains the "Operator Certification Program Standards" developed by the Association of Boards of Certification. Chapter 4 contains a listing of State Drinking Water Administrators and Operator Certification Program Officers. The materials in this package are offered for information only and are intended to assist the States as they begin to review their operator certification programs. This information will be used by EPA as background material to develop operator certification guidelines, as required by Section 1419 of the SDWA. These guidelines, which will be published by February 1999, will specify the minimum requirements for a State operator certification program.

DATES: The document is available beginning February 6, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Copies of "Information for States on Recommended Operator Certification Requirements" are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline, telephone (800) 426-4791. Hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday excluding Federal Holidays. Copies are also available from the Office of Water Resource Center (RC4100), U.S. EPA, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20460. Also, Chapters 1 (excluding appendices), 3 and 4 of the document may be obtained from the EPA Web Site at the URL address: "http://www.epa.gov/OGWDW."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Safe Drinking Water Hotline, telephone (800) 426-4791. For technical inquiries, contact Richard Naylor, Designated Federal Officer, Drinking Water Implementation and Assistance Division, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (4606), U.S. EPA, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20460. The telephone is (202) 260-5135 and the e-mail address is naylor.richard@epamail.epa.gov.

Dated: January 30, 1998.

Robert Perciasepe,*Assistant Administrator, Office of Water.*

[FR Doc. 98-3038 Filed 2-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5962-8]

Notice of Availability for Information for States on Developing Affordability Criteria for Drinking Water**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency.**ACTION:** Notice of document availability.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency is making available Information for States on Developing Affordability Criteria for Drinking Water. The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 require the Agency to publish information to assist states in developing affordability criteria. The Amendments require that the Agency consult with the States and the Rural Utilities Service of the Department of Agriculture in developing this information. The document being made available today was developed by a diverse working group of stakeholders under the auspices of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC). The full NDWAC reviewed a draft of this document and

recommended to EPA that it be made available for public comment. The availability of the draft document was announced in a **Federal Register** notice published on November 21, 1997. The comment period closed on December 31, 1997. The final document being made available today fully reflects the Agency's consultation with the States and the Rural Utilities Service, and, to the extent possible, the comments received from other sources.

DATES: The statute requires that this information be published by February 6, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Address all inquiries concerning this document to Peter E. Shanaghan, Small Systems Coordinator, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, Mail Code 4606, 401 M Street S.W., Washington DC 20460.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Peter E. Shanaghan, 202-260-5813 or shanaghan.peter@epamail.epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A copy of the document may be obtained by calling the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791. The hotline operates Monday through Friday, 9:00 am—5:30 pm (EST). The document may also be downloaded from EPA's homepage, <http://www.epa.gov/OGWDW>.

Dated: January 30, 1998.

Robert Perciasepe,*Assistant Administrator, Office of Water.*

[FR Doc. 98-3039 Filed 2-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5952-3]

Sole Source Aquifer Designation of Poolesville Area Aquifer System, Lower Western Montgomery County, MD**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency.**ACTION:** Notice.

SUMMARY: The Regional Administrator of Region III of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that the portion of the Piedmont aquifer system that underlies Poolesville and the surrounding area in lower western Montgomery County, Maryland (denominated as "Poolesville Area Aquifer System") is the sole or principal source of drinking water for this area and if the aquifer system were contaminated would create a significant hazard to public health. This determination is in response to a

petition submitted by a citizen group, For A Rural Montgomery (FARM), requesting that the Administrator of EPA make a determination under Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300h-3(e), as amended, that the Poolesville Area Aquifer System is a sole or principal source of drinking water for the area. As a result of Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) designation, federal financially assisted projects in the designated area will be subject to EPA review pursuant to section 1424(e) to ensure that these projects are designed and constructed so that they do not contaminate this aquifer so as to create a significant hazard to public health. The Poolesville Area SSA adds an additional area to the existing Maryland Piedmont SSA area, previously designated by EPA in 1980 (45 FR 57165, 08/27/80). The Maryland Piedmont SSA includes seven surface water drainage basins which underlie northwestern Montgomery County, and extend into minor portions of Frederick, Carroll and Howard Counties, MD. The addition of the Poolesville Area Aquifer System to the existing SSA will extend the Maryland Piedmont SSA from State Route 28 (approximate boundary) to the Potomac River, between Little Monocacy River and Seneca Creek's confluence with the Potomac River.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This determination shall become effective February 23, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The data upon which these findings are based are available to the public and may be inspected during normal business hours at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—Region III, Drinking Water Branch, 841 Chestnut Building, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Smith, Drinking Water Branch, U.S. EPA—III at the address above or at (215) 566-5786, e-mail: smith.barbara@epamail.epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300h-3(e), states:

If the Administrator determines, on his own initiative or petition, that an area has an aquifer which is the sole or principal drinking water source for the area and which, if contaminated, would create a significant hazard to public health, he shall publish notice of that determination in the **Federal Register**. After the publication of any such notice, no commitment for federal financial assistance (through a grant, contract, loan guarantee, or otherwise) may be entered into for any project which the Administrator determines may contaminate such aquifer through a recharge zone so as to create a

significant hazard to public health, but a commitment for federal financial assistance may, if authorized under another provision of law, be entered into to plan or design the project to assure that it will not so contaminate the aquifer.

In December 1996, EPA Region III received a petition from FARM, requesting the designation of the aquifer system underlying the Poolesville area as a sole source aquifer under Section 1424(e) of the SDWA. EPA reviewed the petition and supporting documentation and began gathering available data to make a determination. EPA opened the official public comment period on the petition on June 18, 1997 and announced a public hearing in a local paper, to be held in Poolesville. EPA conducted the public hearing on July 24, 1997 at the Poolesville Elementary School. The public comment period closed on August 31, 1997. EPA received eleven letters from a variety of people, mostly representatives of local citizen groups, eight of which expressed support for the SSA designation, two expressed opposition to designation and one letter requested more information and a public hearing. Twenty-seven people attended the public hearing and 19 people presented statements, all in support of designation.

II. Basis for Determination

Among the factors considered by the Regional Administrator as part of the review and technical verification process for designating an area under Section 1424(e) were:

1. The aquifer system underlying the Poolesville area supplies the service area population with 50% or more of its drinking water needs.
2. There are no economical alternative drinking water source or combination of sources to supply the designated service area.
3. The EPA has found that FARM has appropriately delineated the boundaries of the aquifer project review and service area.
4. While the quality of the area's ground water is considered to be good, it is vulnerable to contamination due to the relatively thin soil cover and rapid movement of ground water in fractured rock, coupled with increasing development and other land uses. Thin soil cover may allow contaminants to be rapidly introduced into the ground water with minimal assimilation into the soil. Rapid movement of ground water through fractured rock can allow contaminants to spread quickly, once introduced. Clean up of contaminated fractured aquifers is usually difficult to achieve and an expensive, long term effort. The designated area is underlain

primarily by a fractured nonmarine sedimentary rock aquifer system, with some localized diabase intrusions. The aquifer system also includes an area of phyllite, terrace and alluvial deposits.

5. Definable Aquifer Boundaries: EPA guidance allows designations to be made for entire aquifers, hydrologically connected aquifers (aquifer systems), or part of an aquifer if that portion is hydrologically separated from the rest of the aquifer. The Poolesville Area Aquifer System boundary is based on accepted hydrological principles and EPA's interpretation of available data.

III. Description of the Aquifer System That Underlies the Designated Poolesville Area

The aquifer system underlying the Poolesville area is within the Piedmont Lowland physiographic province. The designated area extends the southwestern boundary of the existing SSA, called the Maryland Piedmont Aquifer, from State Route 28 (approximate boundary) to the Potomac River, between Little Monocacy River and Seneca Creek's confluence with the Potomac River. The designated area encompasses the surface area, as well as the underlying formations. The topography of the area is gently rolling, cut by streams and small tributaries. The area's climate is moderate and somewhat humid. Precipitation that has not evaporated, transpired or drained as runoff from the area recharges the underlying aquifer system with water.

The Poolesville area is underlain primarily by nonmarine sedimentary conglomerates, sandstones, siltstones and shales which have been locally intruded by diabase. These fractured rocks of Triassic age are part of the Newark Group, largely the New Oxford formation. The area northeast of Poolesville is underlain by phyllite crystalline rock of early Paleozoic age (approximate age) and underlies the Barnesville, Beallsville and Jerusalem area. The phyllitic rocks are foliated and fractured. Located west of Poolesville towards the Potomac River, are terrace deposits of Tertiary age, comprised of unconsolidated sediments that are not used for ground water supply. Alluvial sediments of Quaternary age occur along the Potomac River valley and some of the major tributaries, but also are not used for ground water supply.

All drinking water (except commercially obtained bottled water) in the Poolesville area is ground water, supplied by the underlying aquifer system. Poolesville residents are served by public water supply wells, and residents outside of Poolesville

Township obtain their drinking water from private wells.

The quality of ground water underlying the Poolesville area is generally good, but both the relatively thin soil cover and rapid movement of ground water in fractured rock reduce the capacity for contaminant attenuation, making the aquifer vulnerable to contaminants from point and nonpoint sources.

The only alternative sources of water (other than the existing supply of ground water from the Poolesville Area Aquifer System) to be considered include surface water sources, or ground water that is extracted outside the SSA area and transported to the Poolesville area, or a combination of the two. The two most likely scenarios in the event that the area's ground water was made unusable, are that the area would be served by extending water mains from Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's (WSSC) existing distribution system, or by building local intakes and treatment facilities on the Potomac River and supplying the area. A third option is less likely and that would include pumping ground water from areas outside the SSA and delivering the water to the SSA area. All of the above options, and any others not discussed here, are economically infeasible due to the difficulties and costs of constructing water mains, distribution lines and pumping stations through out the entire designated area. Whereas the Town of Poolesville has the water infrastructure in place (wells, treatment, storage and distribution lines) and could probably be connected to the nearest WSSC distribution line for an affordable price, the area outside of Poolesville, that relies on individual wells and has no water distribution system in place, could not afford the massive expense involved in laying distribution pipes to each farm, home, business and school in the designated area. Houses and farms are located farther apart in the areas outside of Poolesville, and could not be put on a distribution system in an economically feasible way.

Local government has acted to protect the ground water quality in Poolesville by starting a Wellhead Protection program in cooperation with the Maryland Department of the Environment. The petitioner group believes that a Sole Source Aquifer designation would augment local ground water protection efforts, and assist in preserving the rural and natural resources of the area.

IV. Information Utilized in Determination

The information utilized in this determination includes: the petition and supporting document submitted to the EPA Region III by FARM, letters received during the public comment period, and public comments received during the public hearing. In addition, much of the information has been derived from published literature on the hydrogeology and water resources of the region. This information is available to the public and may be inspected at the address listed above. The petition and support document, the transcript of the public hearing and EPA's response summary to public comment are available in the Poolesville Public Library, in Poolesville, MD.

V. Project Review

EPA Region III is working with the federal agencies most likely to provide financial assistance to projects in the project review area. Interagency procedures and Memoranda of Understanding will be developed through which EPA will be notified of proposed commitments by federal agencies to projects which could potentially impact the Poolesville Area Aquifer System. The EPA will evaluate such projects, and where necessary, conduct an in-depth review, including soliciting State and local government and public comments when appropriate. Should the Regional Administrator determine that a project may contaminate the aquifer through its recharge zone so as to create a significant hazard to public health, no commitment for federal financial assistance may be entered into for that project. However, a commitment for federal financial assistance may, if authorized under another provision of law, be entered into to plan or design the project to ensure that it will not contaminate the aquifer. Included in the review of any federal financially-assisted projects will be the coordination with state and local agencies and the project's developers. Their comments will be given full consideration and EPA's review will attempt to complement and support state and local ground water protection measures. Although the project review process cannot be delegated, EPA will rely to the maximum extent possible on any existing or future state and/or local control measures to protect the quality of ground water in the Poolesville Area Aquifer Review Area.

VI. Economic and Regulatory Impact

Pursuant to the provisions of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), 5 U.S.C. 605(b), I hereby certify that this designation will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. For purposes of this Certification, the "small entity" shall have the same meaning as given in Section 601 of the RFA. This action is only applicable to projects with the potential to impact the Poolesville Area Aquifer System SSA as designated.

The only affected entities will be those businesses, organizations or governmental jurisdictions that request federal financial assistance for projects which have the potential for contaminating the Sole Source Aquifer so as to create a significant hazard to public health. EPA does not expect to be reviewing small isolated commitments of financial assistance on an individual basis, unless a cumulative impact on the aquifer is anticipated; accordingly, the number of affected small entities will be minimal.

For those small entities which are subject to review, the impact to today's action will not be significant. Most projects subject to this review will be preceded by a ground water impact assessment required pursuant to other federal laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as amended 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. Integration of those related review procedures with sole source aquifer review will allow EPA and other Federal agencies to avoid delay or duplication of effort in approving financial assistance, thus minimizing any adverse effect on those small entities which are affected. Finally, today's action does not prevent grants of federal financial assistance which may be available to any affected small entity in order to pay for the redesign of the project to assure protection of the aquifer.

Under Executive Order 12866, EPA must judge whether a regulation is "major" and therefore subject to the requirement of a Regulatory Impact Analysis. This regulation is not major because it will not have an annual effect of \$100 million or more on the economy, will not cause any major increase in costs or prices and will not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or the ability of United States enterprises to compete in domestic or export markets. Today's action only affects the Poolesville Area Aquifer System in Western Montgomery County, MD. It provides an additional review of ground water protection

measures, incorporating state and local measures whenever possible, for only those projects which request federal financial assistance.

VII. Summary

This determination affects only the Poolesville Area Aquifer System located in Western Montgomery County, MD. As a result of this Sole Source Aquifer determination, all federal financially-assisted projects proposed in the designated area will be subject to EPA review to ensure that they do not create a significant hazard to public health. Once designated, the Poolesville Area Aquifer System will become part of the existing MD Piedmont SSA area.

Dated: January 14, 1998.

Thomas C. Voltaggio,

Acting Regional Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—Region III.
[FR Doc. 98-3042 Filed 2-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[ER-FRL-5488-7]

Environmental Impact Statements and Regulations; Availability of EPA Comments

Availability of EPA comments prepared January 19, 1998 through January 23, 1998 pursuant to the Environmental Review Process (ERP), under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act as amended. Requests for copies of EPA comments can be directed to the Office of Federal Activities at (202) 564-7267.

An explanation of the ratings assigned to draft environmental impact statements (EISs) was published in FR dated April 11, 1997 (62 FR 16154).

Draft EISs

ERP No. D-AFS-J65277-CO Rating EC2, Sheep Flats Diversity Unit, Timber Sales and Related Road Construction, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Collbran Ranger District, Mesa County, CO.

Summary: EPA expressed environmental concerns and requested additional information related to sedimentation potential, surface water resource buffer zone mitigation and intermittent road closure BMPs.

ERP No. D-AFS-J65279-MT Rating EC2, Wayup Mine/Fourth of July Road Access, Right-of-Way Grant, Kootenai National Forest, Libby Ranger District, Lincoln County, MT.

Summary: EPA expressed environmental concerns and

recommended additional alternatives be developed to minimize water quality impacts, disclosure of the effects of "motorized" mine exploration and development and incorporation of total maximum daily loads for water pollutants in the EIS.

ERP No. D-AFS-J65281-UT Rating LO, Spruce Ecosystem Recovery Project, Implementation, Dixie National Forest, Cedar City Ranger District, Iron County, UT.

SUMMARY: EPA expressed lack of objections.

ERP No. D-AFS-K65201-CA Rating EC2, Liberty Forest Health Improvement Project, Implementation, Tahoe National Forests, Sierraville Ranger District, Sierra and Nevada Counties, CA.

SUMMARY: EPA expressed environmental concerns involving threshold of concern (TOC) exceedences in three sub-watersheds and road management proposals.

ERP No. D-BLM-J01076-WY Rating EC2, Powder River (WYW136142) and Thundercloud (WYW136458) Coal Lease Applications, Federal Coal Leasing, Campbell and Converse Counties, WY.

SUMMARY: EPA expressed environmental concerns and requested additional information related to Air Quality and Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources.

ERP No. D-BLM-L65295-OR Rating EC2, Northeastern Oregon Assembled Land Exchange Resource Management Plan (RMP), Implementation, Site Specific, John Day, Umatilla, Granda Ronde, Power River Basins, Grant, Umatilla, Morrow, Wheeler, Baker, Wallowa and Union, OR.

SUMMARY: EPA expressed environmental concerns based on potential water quality and riparian habitat impacts, loss of Columbia Basin shrub-steppe habitat, and loss of old growth forest habitat.

ERP No. DS-AFS-J65213-MT Rating LO, Helena National Forest and Elkhorn Mountain portion of the Deerlodge National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Updated Information on Oil and Gas Leasing, Implementation, several counties, MT.

SUMMARY: EPA expressed lack of objections.

Final EISs

ERP No. F-AFS-J02034-UT, Western Uinta Basin Oil and Gas Leasing, Implementation, Federal Oil and Gas Estate on Land Administered by the Uinta and Ashley National Forests in the western portion of the National Forests in the Western portion of the Uinta Basin, Wasatch and Duchesne Counties, UT.

Summary: EPA expressed lack of objection to the preferred alternative described in the Final EIS.

ERP No. F-AFS-J65257-UT, High Uintas Wilderness Forest Plan Amendment, Implementation, Ashley and Wasatch-Cache National Forests, Duchesne and Summit Counties, UT.

Summary: EPA expressed lack of objections with the preferred alternative.

ERP No. F-AFS-J65258-MT, Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan, Implementation, Oil and Gas Leasing Analysis, Upper Missouri River Basin, several counties, MT.

Summary: EPA expressed environmental concerns regarding the cumulative impacts analysis, and impacts to wetlands and air quality. EPA recommended that air and water quality monitoring be implemented at the lease proposal stage to verify site conditions and validate predictions.

ERP No. F-AFS-J65264-UT, Sheepherder Hill Sanitation Salvage Sale, Management of Selected Vegetation Stands, Implementation, Uinta National Forest, Spanish Fork District, Nebo Management Area, Utah County, UT.

Summary: The final EIS addressed EPA's concerns.

Dated: February 3, 1998.

William D. Dickerson,

Director, NEPA Compliance Division, Office of Federal Activities.

[FR Doc. 98-3082 Filed 2-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-U

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[ER-FRL-5488-6]

Environmental Impact Statements; Notice of Availability

Responsible Agency: Office of Federal Activities, General Information (202) 564-7167 OR (202) 564-7153.

Weekly receipt of Environmental Impact Statements

Filed January 26, 1998 Through January 30, 1998

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.9

EIS No. 980016, Draft EIS, NSF, Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, Proposal to Modernize through Reconstruction and Replacement of Key Facilities, Antarctica, Due: March 23, 1998. Contact: Joyce A. Jatko (703) 306-1032.

EIS No. 980017, Final EIS, IBR, CA, Hamilton City Pumping Plant, Fish Screen Improvement Project, COE Section 10 and 404 Permits, Central Valley, Butte, Colusa, Glenn and