

Recreational Drinking Water System Requirements

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Highlights...

- Drinking water laws and requirements are complex.
- Operators of very small drinking water systems may not be aware of all requirements.
- A template document was developed to help operators know what is required.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service policy states that all agency-owned drinking water systems will be operated in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act <<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/sdwa>> and the requirements of the State in which each system is located. This policy applies to Forest Service-owned water systems that are operated by permittees, as well as those operated by Forest Service personnel. This guidance is contained in Forest Service Manual chapter 7420 <<http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsm/7400/7420.doc>>. Requirements for Forest Service-owned drinking water systems (figure 1) change over time as new laws and regulations are implemented to assure the safety of drinking water.



Figure 1—Forest Service recreation site visitors have trusted their drinking water to be safe since the early 1900s. These young women enjoyed a refreshing drink from a water fountain at the Verlot Campground in the Darrington Ranger District, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Pacific Northwest Region in the 1940s.

As regulatory requirements for drinking water systems increase in abundance and complexity, it can be difficult for recreation water system operators, especially permittees, to determine what to do to make sure they are in compliance and are providing safe drinking water for their customers. Most of these small recreation water systems are categorized as either “Public Transient Non-Community” or “Non-Public Transient” (figure 2). The requirements for testing and monitoring these systems are similar but not identical.

When the requirements for a particular system are explained to the operator clearly and concisely, compliance tends to be better. The Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) has developed a template document that can be easily modified/completed by the facilities or environmental engineer to suit the circumstances of each

individual water system. The document “Operation, Maintenance, and Monitoring Requirements for Recreation Area Drinking Water Systems Supplied by a Groundwater Well” will help the operators of small drinking water systems understand the requirements. The completed document can be delivered to the permittee/system operator either with the site permit or separately. Use of the document isn’t mandatory, but if it’s used, the facilities or environmental engineer should update it whenever requirements change.

Sections of the document should be modified based on the specifics of the system. **Orange text** inside orange square brackets ([]) indicates a word or phrase to be chosen. It also is used to explain how to modify the document to match the specifics of the system and also to denote where information must be added. The document doesn’t include

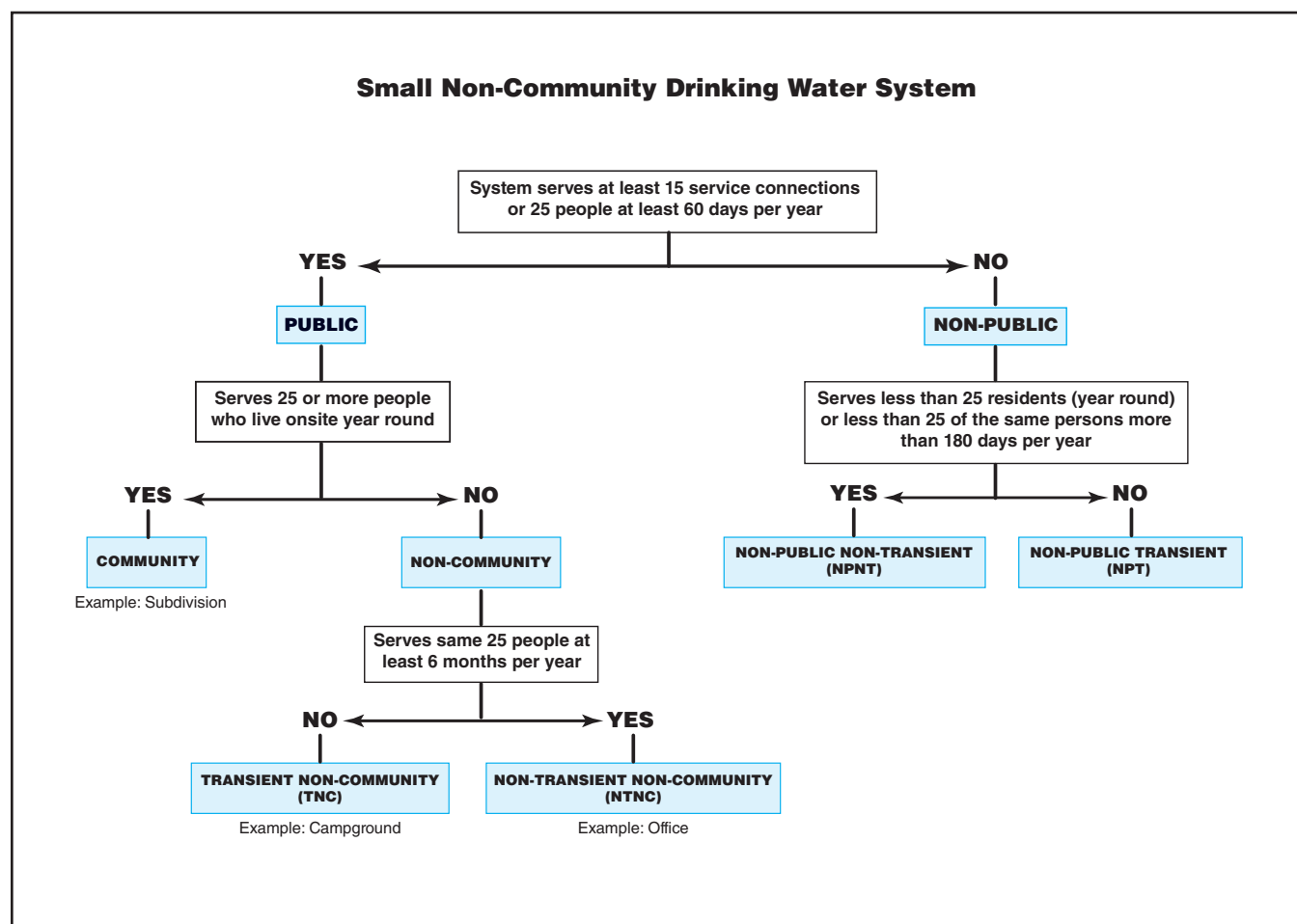


Figure 2—Use this flowchart to determine the regulatory category of a Forest Service-owned water system.

much background, but does include links to more detailed information about requirements. It is available to Forest Service employees electronically at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/eng/programs/water/documents/1173-2WO1_508_RecWaterReq.docx>.

Concessionaires and permittees are more likely to comply with drinking water system operation and monitoring requirements if they don't have to dig through innumerable Web sites and documents to find the laws and regulations that apply to their specific Forest Service-owned water system. The document "Operation, Maintenance, and Monitoring Requirements for Recreation Area Drinking Water Systems Supplied by a Groundwater Well" can help system operators do their job more efficiently while providing safe water at recreation sites (figure 3).



Figure 3—The Forest Service owns many drinking water systems at recreation sites. The water faucet shown above is at the Sunshine Campground in the Norwood Ranger District, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, Rocky Mountain Region.

About the Authors

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Library Card

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