

July 23, 2003

The Honorable Marianne L. Horinko
Acting Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Ms. Horinko:

On May 14-15, 2003, the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) held its spring meeting in Washington, D.C. At the meeting the Council heard a presentation from Mr. Jay Rutherford, President of the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA), concerning a recently completed report that assesses the current and growing gap between the resources needed to administer state drinking water programs and available resources.

State drinking water programs are responsible for ensuring that approximately 165,000 public water systems provide safe drinking water to over 260,000 million consumers nationwide. Based on a growing concern that these programs may not have sufficient resources to adequately manage these programs, ASDWA carried out a study during the 2001-2002 time frame. The study documents the expanded scope and complexity of state drinking water programs in view of the comprehensive, integrated approach to public health protection mandated in the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as well as an array of state-mandated program requirements that support the national program.

In particular, the study indicated a 2002 gap of approximately \$229 million between funds expended on state drinking water programs and the amount actually needed to administer these programs, which is projected to grow to approximately \$369 million (over 55% of the total projected need) by 2006. The study similarly found a human resource shortfall in 2002 of approximately 29%, which is expected to grow to 36% by 2006. In addition to resource shortfalls and of equal significance, the study identified a variety of federal and state barriers to state drinking water program implementation.

The Council recognized the difficult financial situation that states are facing and the impact on the state drinking water programs. The Council expressed concern that further reductions in state drinking water programs could result in states being unable to meet their responsibilities under the SDWA, which may affect the level of public health protection afforded consumers.

The Council recommended that USEPA review the ASDWA report and work with states to develop a strategy to address the resource needs that state drinking water programs are currently facing.

Sincerely,

Brenda P. Johnson /s/
Designated Federal Officer
National Drinking Water Advisory Council

cc: Stephen L. Johnson, Acting Deputy Administrator
G. Tracy Mehan III, Assistant Administrator for Water
Cynthia C. Dougherty, Director, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water
David Spath, Chair, NDWAC