

A CALL TO ACTION – A RECOMMITMENT TO ASSESSING AND PROTECTING SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER

WHY A CALL TO ACTION NOW?

As a nation we face a host of water quality and quantity challenges that are both pressing and ongoing. Persistent threats and challenges, and disastrous chemical spills highlight the importance of safe drinking water to public health and local economies. The public and private costs of inaction can be extensive. Together, we must consider lessons learned over the past decade and apply newly available resources to prioritize threats and protect drinking water sources, both surface and ground water. A realistic assessment of recent events demonstrates that additional action by federal, state, and local partners can and must be taken to effectively protect drinking water sources.

Our Vision for the Future: The Nation's Source Waters are Protected

Our vision includes the following elements:

- **Federal, State, and Local Actions Reflect the High Value of Safe Drinking Water:** The high value of drinking water is widely recognized at all levels of government and among the general public, by regular and systematic actions to help ensure sufficient quantities of high quality water into the future.
- **Source Water Protection is Embedded into Our Processes:** Source water protection is “hard-wired” into everyday practice at federal, state, and local levels.
- **All Stakeholders Work to Help Protect Drinking Water Sources:** Stakeholders across multiple fields and sectors are invested in source water protection. We can achieve mutual benefits through government agencies, non-governmental organizations, water utilities, communities, emergency response personnel, and businesses/corporations working collaboratively.

To accomplish this vision, we recommend the following key actions:

- 1** Update/improve source water assessments and protection plans to prioritize risks and actions, by leveraging new data and tools.
- 2** Take priority actions to protect sources of drinking water, working with key partners.
- 3** Coordinate, plan, and communicate in advance with key “upstream” partners as well as within water utilities to help ensure that, in an event, rapid emergency notification is provided to facilitate activation of mitigation measures.



Our Vision

All drinking water sources are adequately protected. As a result, the nation gains profound public health advantages as well as economic benefits.

KEY ACTIONS FOR SOURCE WATER PROTECTION LEADERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

DRINKING WATER UTILITIES

Source water protection is part of an effective multiple-barrier approach to ensure the safety and quality of drinking water.

- » Leverage new contaminant information resources to update source water assessments, source water protection plans, and emergency response plans.
- » Work with local/state partners on priority actions that prevent and/or mitigate the potential for source water contamination.
- » Build relationships with emergency responders and staff at sites storing priority contaminants.
- » Develop communication plans to obtain early, actionable information from local and state agencies and potential contaminant sources.
- » Identify funding strategies for priority measures that protect source water.
- » Develop and exercise response and recovery plans for potential contamination events.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local entities are well situated to address specific local source water concerns through land use planning and collaboration with key stakeholders.

- » Address potential impacts on drinking water quality and public health through land use planning (from plan development and implementation through capital investment), zoning, development regulations, and code enforcement.
- » Disseminate educational information to community members on water quality issues.
- » Coordinate with states and water utilities in developing source water assessments and implementing protective measures.

STATE DRINKING WATER AND OTHER PROGRAMS

Collaboration between state water programs and other influential agencies (agriculture, parks, fish & game, forestry, conservation, and others) provides multiple opportunities to protect drinking water sources.

- » Where source water assessments are no longer current or sufficient for supporting source water protection efforts, encourage and engage in targeted updating of source water assessments in collaboration with drinking water systems, and other state, federal, and local officials.
- » Leverage the Clean Water Act and other programs and authorities to protect water supplies.
- » Communicate key information from source water assessments to stakeholders to guide priority actions and advance protection.
- » Factor source water protection needs into land acquisition and management strategies.
- » Partner with communities and other watershed and ground water stakeholders to implement priority actions.
- » Facilitate community and state-level all-hazards planning.

A CALL TO ACTION TO DEFEND DRINKING WATER

Source water protection ultimately takes place at the local level and, those on the front lines of drinking water protection – drinking water utilities and local governments, supported by state, federal, and community-sponsored programs – have unique opportunities to defend drinking water. Federal agencies can provide tools and data, and leverage programs and authorities to protect drinking water sources. Other source water partners, including Source Water Collaborative (SWC) members and their constituents, also play vital roles. All SWC members and other stakeholders can seize opportunities to establish, participate in or support state and local collaboratives to protect drinking water sources. Defending drinking water is truly a shared responsibility among all concerned stakeholders -- as responses to recent contamination episodes have made abundantly clear.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Land management, environmental, agriculture, scientific, and public health agencies have a role in protecting drinking water sources.

- » Encourage and support collaborative approaches to source water protection between programs at the federal, state, and local levels, including USDA conservation and forestry programs, EPA programs, and all federal programs that support the quality of water resources.
- » Assist state agencies and local communities to improve source water assessments and protection plans by providing information on the nature and quantity of potential contaminant sources, as well as modeling and analytical tools to characterize contaminant transport in surface and ground waters.
- » Continue to expand electronic data sharing among federal offices and agencies to bring the most current and complete datasets possible to bear on source water assessments and protection plans.
- » Identify opportunities to incentivize collaboration between the chemical emergency response community and state and local source water assessment and protection activities.
- » Encourage upstream entities to take on shared responsibility for protecting source water, including enhancing rapid notification of contaminant spills to downstream drinking water utilities.
- » Promote use of Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs to support preparedness and source water protection priorities.

OTHER SOURCE WATER PARTNERS

- » Engage in public participation processes under state and federal programs and local land use planning processes to protect sources of drinking water. In particular, take advantage of opportunities to engage in various Clean Water Act actions and projects to protect sources of drinking water [e.g., water quality standards, Total Maximum Daily Loads, point source discharge National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, nonpoint source project development].
- » Promote grassroots place-based initiatives to advance source water protection.
- » Share data and information to help target source water protection and citizen scientist monitoring.
- » Continue to plan and install soil health best management practices to obtain the multiple benefits of soil health, including improved water quality and drinking water protection.
- » Inform and influence land use decisions that adequately consider potential impacts to drinking water sources.
- » Encourage land conservation practitioners to prioritize working with landowners, drinking water suppliers, and other interested parties to protect undeveloped land that is critically important for protecting drinking water source areas, such as headwater streams, riparian areas, wetlands and intact forests.
- » Communicate the importance of source water protection to local, state, and federal decision-makers.
- » Understand local communities' emergency response procedures for chemical spill events.
- » Adapt positive examples in contingency planning from local source water collaborations.

FOR A COMPLETE COPY OF THE CALL TO ACTION TO DEFEND DRINKING WATER INCLUDING SUPPORTING RESOURCES PLEASE VISIT THE SOURCE WATER COLLABORATIVE WEBSITE AT [SOURCEWATERCOLLABORATIVE.ORG](https://sourcewatercollaborative.org)

WHAT IS THE SOURCE WATER COLLABORATIVE?

These national organizations have united to protect America's drinking water at the source – in the lakes, rivers, streams and aquifers we tap for drinking purposes. The Source Water Collaborative (SWC) was originally formed in 2006 with the goal to combine the strengths and tools of a diverse set of member organizations to act now, and protect drinking water sources for generations to come.



Comprised of federal, state, and local partners, the SWC has come together to further the goals of protecting sources of drinking water – recognizing that resources are extremely limited, authorities are split, and the actors who can actually protect source waters are diffuse. Each

national organization in the Collaborative understands and appreciates the importance of source water protection. Individually, each promotes implementation of source water protection in their overall mission. Each organization recognizes the synergy of coordinated actions and the need for leveraging each other's resources in order to increase the chances for success over each entity going it alone.

- American Planning Association
- American Water Works Association
- Association of Clean Water Administrators
- Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- Association of State Drinking Water Administrators
- Clean Water Action/Clean Water Fund
- Environmental Finance Center Network
- Ground Water Protection Council
- Groundwater Foundation
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- National Environmental Services Center
- National Ground Water Association
- National Rural Water Association
- North American Lake Management Society
- River Network
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- Smart Growth America
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Forest Service (Northeastern Area)
- Water Systems Council

For a complete list of SWC members and available tools and resources, see www.sourcewatercollaborative.org.



Note: All actions that EPA may take in furtherance of this statement are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and the parties to this agreement will not submit a claim to EPA for compensation for services rendered as part of this agreement. In signing this statement, none of the Source Water Collaborative member organizations, including the EPA, are obligating funds nor making a commitment to provide funding to any organization or individual in the future. Further, EPA cannot endorse the sale or purchase of products or services developed by the participating organizations.