

Drinking Water Quality Improves Over Past Nine Years

(Washington, D.C.) Responding to media coverage of trends in environmental protection, the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) analyzed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's publicly available data on U.S. drinking water supplies compliance with EPA's drinking water quality standards. EPA's data reflects a trend of increased compliance and fewer violations of the key EPA health standards over the past nine years.

Fiscal Year	(EPA's) Number of U.S. Drinking Water Supplies in Violation with a Federal Maximum Contaminant Level (standard)	Total Number of Violations with a Federal Maximum Contaminant Level (standard)	Percentage improved from previous nine year averages
2002	3,193	4,693	36 & 40 %
2001	3,241	5,231	35 & 33 %
2000	3,161	4,754	36 & 39 %
1999	3,298	5,528	34 & 29 %
1998	3,733	6,340	25 & 19 %
1997	3,710	5,804	25 & 26 %
1996	4,411	7,391	11 & 6 %
1995	4,652	7,147	7 & 9 %
1994	4,966	7,829	

This assessment relies on EPA compliance data of environmental compliance of water supplies (EPA 816-K-03-001-Jan. 2003). EPA's Safe Drinking Water Information System is the national regulatory compliance database which includes information on the nation's 170,000 public water systems.

NRWA Water Analyst Mike Keegan said, *"Our association has one mission – to protect the quality of drinking water – and we feel an obligation to provide the public with unbiased and objective environmental data on the quality of their drinking water. The more the consumer knows and understands the better they are empowered to control their local environmental resources including their public drinking water supplies. Drinking water protection is perhaps the most important federal environmental program to the public's immediate and long-term health. The EPA rules are incredibly complex and thorough -- often requiring daily monitoring of drinking water quality and regulating upwards of a hundred contaminants at levels in the parts per billion."*

Over the past few weeks many U.S. newspapers have told their readers that drinking water quality is declining, for example the Columbus Ledger Enquirer (Tues., Oct. 12, 2004) made the following claim in their analysis of environmental data over the past 5 years, *"America's environment deteriorated in many critical areas - including the quality of air in cities and the quality of water that people drink..."*

Drinking water protection is one of the oldest and most established federal environmental programs under the EPA. It's essential that EPA is able to make comparative evaluations of the effectiveness of their programs. EPA's data seems to contradict the conclusions and information that has been provided to the public recently. Other newspapers that publish the same data in October include:

- The Wichita Eagle, KS - Oct 20, 2004
- Kansas.com, KS - Oct 20, 2004
- San Jose Mercury News, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- Miami Herald, FL - Oct 12, 2004
- San Jose Mercury News, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- Kansas City Star, United States - Oct 17, 2004
- Detroit Free Press, MI - Oct 17, 2004
- Duluth News Tribune, MN - Oct 12, 2004
- Tallahassee.com, FL - Oct 12, 2004
- The Wichita Eagle, KS - Oct 20, 2004
- San Jose Mercury News, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- Detroit Free Press, MI - Oct 17, 2004
- San Jose Mercury News, CA - Oct 13, 2004
- Kansas City Star, United States - Oct 12, 2004
- Kansas.com, KS - Oct 12, 2004
- philly.com, PA - Oct 12, 2004
- Macon Telegraph, GA - Oct 12, 2004
- Monterey County Herald, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- Biloxi Sun Herald, MS - Oct 12, 2004
- Kentucky.com, KY - Oct 12, 2004
- Knight-Ridder Washington Bureau, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- San Luis Obispo Tribune, CA - Oct 12, 2004
- Philadelphia Inquirer, PA - Oct 12, 2004
- Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, GA - Oct 12, 2004
- Myrtle Beach Sun News, SC - Oct 12, 2004
- Centre Daily Times, PA - Oct 12, 2004
- Fort Wayne News Sentinel, IN - Oct 12, 2004
- Bradenton Herald, FL - Oct 12, 2004
- The State, SC - Oct 12, 2004
- Pioneer Press, MN - Oct 17, 2004
- San Jose Mercury News, CA - Oct 13, 2004