Urge the U.S. EPA to Allow for Internet Publishing of Consumer Confidence Reports in Lieu of Mailing

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting comments on their September 11, 2012, Draft Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) Electronic Delivery Options and Considerations until October 11, 2012 (see www.ruralwater.org for a copy of the proposal). NRWA will attend EPA’s October 1, 2012 stakeholders meeting on the issue and NRWA will be commenting in support of the “notification that CCR is available on website” option included in EPA’s Draft Options for electronic delivery because this option would result in additional, improved accessibility and enhanced consumer information – and greatly reduce the cost of distributing the reports.

The “notification that CCR is available on website” option allows a community water system to mail to each bill-paying customer a notification that the CCR is available, and provides a “direct” URL to the CCR where it can be viewed. A direct URL is one that does not require a customer to navigate to a webpage that requires a customer to search for the CCR. The method of the notification may be, but is not limited to, a postcard, water bill insert, statement on the water bill or community newsletter.

For the past year, EPA has been considering a number of options for utilizing electronic delivery of CCRs. This has been occurring simultaneously with the Congressional effort to change the law to allow for the internet publishing of CCRs. Congressman Young (FL) and Senator Toomey (PA) have sponsored legislation, “The End Unnecessary Costs Caused by Report Mailing Act of 2011,” in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996 to allow for this CCR distribution option.

How Can Water Systems Comment to EPA?

Comments can be sent to EPA by email: ccrretrospectivereview@epa.gov, by October 11, 2012. Include your water system name, contact information, number of persons served, and cost savings estimate if available. A sample message is included below, or you can craft your own comments.

We support access to all drinking water quality information to our public (who owns and manages the water systems through their local governments).

We urge the EPA to allow for the “notification that CCR is available on website” option included in EPA’s Draft Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) Electronic Delivery Options and Considerations because this option would result in additional, improved accessibility and enhanced consumer information – and greatly reduce the cost of distributing the reports. This option would improve public access to the CCR information by allowing the information to be available constantly on the internet (not only once a year), make it easier for water systems to timely update the content of the information, and would not be cost-prohibitive to include additional drinking water information. Consumers without internet access would still be provided a paper copy of the CCR. The financial savings from paper publishing, copying, mailing, and from potentially maintaining a complex consumer email data-system would be an appreciated cost savings to local communities. Small communities often have competing public expenditures and limited funding. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Please contact NRWA with any questions (keegan@ruralwater.org).