

# National Drinking Water Contaminant Occurrence Data Base - Stakeholder Meeting Summary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

February 12-13, 1998

### Background

The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 (SDWA Amendments, Section 126) require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish a National Drinking Water Contaminant Occurrence Data Base to:

- Include both regulated and unregulated contaminants
- Identify contaminants that may be placed on the Contaminant Candidate List
- Support the Administrator's determinations to regulate contaminants in the future
- Support the review of existing regulations every six years and of monitoring requirements
- Make the data base available to the public in readily accessible form
- Be assembled by August 1999, and maintained thereafter

The Environmental Protection Agency has requested input from the public, states and the scientific community on the design and structure, as well as related design factors such as input parameters and requirements and future use of a National Drinking Water Contaminant Occurrence Data Base (NCOD). The NCOD is planned to be a collection of data of documented quality on unregulated and regulated chemical, radiological, microbial, and physical contaminants, and other such contaminants likely to occur, in finished, raw and source waters of public water systems (PWS) of the United States and its territories.

Section 125 of the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 provides the EPA Administrator the authority to require reporting of parametric data for both regulated and unregulated contaminants to the NCOD to support regulatory decisions. The approach described below for NCOD relies principally on electronic data reporting.

To date, the EPA/OGWDW NCOD Development Team has:

- Held a stakeholders meeting in May 1997 which included participants from states, the drinking water industry, public health organizations, environmental organizations, and the public
- Prepared a development strategy
- Held three joint information requirements planning meetings with (1) internal EPA stakeholders, (2) external stakeholders, and (3) EPA and external stakeholders; and a series of technical exchange meetings on: microbiological contaminants, data quality, sample results, public health and environmental factors, and public access - with the purpose of obtaining more detailed technical input on these topics for the information requirements process.

Now, the design phase will begin focusing on the results of the information requirements planning phase: incorporation of the 76 data elements and 20 linkages.

Specific questions that EPA needs input on are:

**What data elements should be included in Release 1 of NCOD?** Of the 76 data elements proposed for consideration in Release 1, new chemical and microbial data elements for State reporting focus mainly on

data quality, location, treatment and population factors required for conducting the regulatory analyses and for comparability of the data.

**What specific data element standards should be used for the data elements?** EPA will draw on existing data element standards as much as possible.

**How will electronic reporting by States, public water systems and/or laboratories best be accomplished?** Electronic reporting will be relied to take advantage of the efficiencies this technology offers. Options may include sequential reporting of the data, or direct reporting from the lab to the public water system (PWS), State and EPA, with an EPA holding time for data quality review.

**What electronic platform(s) should be used to support the NCOD, recognizing public access as a major consideration in data base design?** Several options exist such building on SDWIS or STORET, or creating a new stand-alone data base. Regardless of the platform options, all State reporting would be through SDWIS.

**What options for data retrieval should be considered?** Options may include through SDWIS or through another platform, such as Envirofacts or Surf Your Watershed.

**What plan does EPA have for using the data? What kind of analyses will EPA apply to the data?** EPA is developing a plan for analyzing the data which will be available later in 1998.

**What information will be available to the public and in what form should it be provided?** The information made available to the public may include the complete data set, summarized results, and interpretive notes. Summaries of analyses may be available electronically or in hard (paper) copy.

### **Summary**

The National Contaminant Occurrence Data Base Team held the second national stakeholders meeting on Design Options for the Data Base on February 12-13, 1998. Twelve state program managers participated in the meeting. Attendance also included representatives from the public, Fairfax (VA) County Water Authority, Wichita (KS) Water and Sewer Department, Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, American Water Works Association, National Association of Water Companies, Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, Association of State and Territorial Public Health Laboratory Directors, American Public Health Association, and others. Discussions suggested that required reporting for PWS information on contaminant occurrence reported through the states may be able to be reduced from that projected based on previous Information Requirements Planning meetings. However, many data elements should remain as fields in the data base for comparison to ambient and special study results. Design should accommodate nondetection results and ease of data entry and retrieval, as well as consider cost. Canadian experience presented at the meeting indicated that details describing features of a treatment facility were not used very often in their data base. A detailed summary of the meeting will be available in April 1998. This stakeholders meeting culminated an intensive 8-week period of obtaining input on data elements for the NCOD from a range of stakeholders. Evaluation of data elements for the NCOD will occur over the next two months.

### **Next Steps**

Decisions on the data elements for the structure of the NCOD will be made in Spring, 1998, followed by a decision on the electronic platform that will house the data base. The final release of the NCOD will be by August 1999, as required by law.

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