

GOVERNMENT

EPA Issues Determination on 11 Contaminants, Punts on Two Biggies

Last spring, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a preliminary determination not to regulate 11 contaminants on its second drinking water contaminant candidate list (CCL), concluding they do not occur at levels of public health concern in public water systems. A regulatory determination is a formal decision on whether EPA should develop a national primary drinking water regulation for a specific contaminant. The Safe Drinking Water Act requires EPA every five years to select at least five contaminants from the most recent CCL to determine whether or not to regulate them. In 2005, the agency published the second CCL of 51 contaminants.

The 11 contaminants that will not be regulated are: boron (a naturally occurring substance); dacthal mono- and di-acid

degradates (herbicides); 1,1-dichloro-2,2-bis (p-chlorophenyl) ethylene (a degradate of DDT); 1,3-dichloropropene (Telone, a soil fumigant); 2,4-dinitrotoluene and 2,6-dinitrotoluene (in ammunition, explosives, dyes, polyurethane foams, and automobile air bags); s-ethyl propyl thiocarbamate and Terbacil (herbicides); Fonofos (soil insecticide); and 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane (volatile organic compound).

EPA determined that two other contaminants—perchlorate and MTBE—require additional investigation to ascertain total human exposure and health risks. This outraged many who have been arguing for years for safety standards for these controversial compounds.

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, issued a statement saying, “It is simply unacceptable that EPA would postpone, yet again, a decision on whether to protect our children and families from the dangerous chemical perchlorate. Just last December EPA discontinued

testing for perchlorate in tap water. I am outraged that EPA has yet again refused to do its duty to protect the health of our families and communities from perchlorate pollution. I have introduced two bills on perchlorate—one to require testing and public disclosure of contamination, the other ordering EPA to quickly set a standard. It is clear that action is needed.”

The Natural Resources Defense Council accused EPA of “abdicating its responsibility once more,” stating that numerous data already exist regarding measurable perchlorate concentrations in human and cow milk, food items, and human urine, and on the risks of exposure.

Visit www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/reg_determine2.html, boxer.senate.gov, and www.nrdc.org.

Texas Legislators Pass Major Water Bill

In late May, Texas legislators passed Senate Bill 3 providing for the development, management, and preservation of the state’s water resources. It was the state’s first major water-planning bill in a decade, according to the *Dallas News*. A key aspect of the bill is its provision for “environmental flows” designed to protect fish, wildlife, and wetlands in streams, estuaries, and bays. It establishes a basin-by-basin process for developing recommendations to meet instream needs and directs the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to establish environmental flow standards to be used in subsequent water rights allocations.

SB3 also provides for the establishment of water conservation and planning programs, requiring public water providers serving greater than 3,300 connections to prepare water conservation plans, and mandating the implementation of a state water conservation public awareness program. Funding for water supply projects is to be allocated with priority to entities that either have achieved or will achieve significant water conservation savings.

HydroFacts

WATER FOR ENERGY

Total daily water withdrawals for coal and gas steam-generating electric plants in the Interior West:
over 650 million gallons (2,000 acre-feet)

Water consumed per kilowatt-hour generated varies greatly with type of plant and its elevation:

Typical case:

coal-burning power plants use on average 0.50 gallons

Worst case:

thermonuclear plant located in low desert uses 0.70 - 0.90 gallons

Best case:

new natural gas plants use about 0.30 gallons

Future case:

dry cooling systems (now used in over 50 plants) use 0 gallons

ENERGY FOR WATER

Percent of natural gas used in California associated with the use of water: 20

Percent of electricity used on western farms to pump groundwater: 90

Rank of water sources by energy intensity (from low to high):

- local surface water
- reuse of water
- local groundwater
- imported surface or groundwater

