



WATER POLICY

Safe Drinking Water Act

What Decision Makers Should Know

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Water is one of Florida's most abundant natural resources. Water is a crucial resource that impacts not just the environment, but important industries that contribute to Florida's economy, such as tourism, agriculture, and business. To avoid water conflicts between users, enact appropriate public policy, and responsibly manage water resources, it is important to understand the best available science on the topic as well as public opinions about water issues.

Public opinions of water in Florida

1. Floridians are more concerned about water quality and safety than water quantity.
2. Florida residents place the most importance on clean drinking water (93%). They are then concerned with clean beaches (90.5%), oceans (89.3%), bays/estuaries (89.1%), lakes and rivers (88.9%); plentiful water for agriculture (88.6%); and clean groundwater (88.1%).
3. More people believe that water quality is getting worse as opposed to getting better.
4. 34.4% of Floridians said quality is declining in bays and 33.9% believe the water quality of our oceans is declining.
5. Almost 40% of Florida residents have experienced some kind of negative impact due to water quality including poor quality drinking water; closed beaches, springs, rivers, or lakes; and prohibitions on eating fish they have caught.
6. Almost 50% of Florida residents feel saltwater intrusion is a highly or extremely important issue.

Specific information about the Safe Drinking Water Act

Public water systems: All public water systems must have at least 15 service connections or serve at least 25 people per day for 60 days a year. Public water systems are categorized as community water systems and non-community water systems depending upon whether or not the people are served by the system year-round or not. In addition, there are two types of non-community water systems depending on whether or not the system serves the same people or not throughout the year: non-transient non-community water system (serves the same people) and transient non-community water system (serves the public but not the same individuals).

Sources of contaminants: Contaminants which might impact public health include improperly disposed of chemicals, animal wastes, pesticides, human wastes, wastes



injected deep underground, and naturally occurring substances. Under the SDWA, six groups of water contaminants which may adversely impact public health and are regulated by the federal drinking water standards: microorganisms, disinfectant, disinfection byproducts, inorganic chemicals, organic chemical, and radionuclides.

Impacts to public health: Drinking water is directly associated with human health due to daily intake. The impacts of poor drinking water can include acute effects or chronic effects on human health. Any contaminants should be carefully regulated to ensure the quality of drinking water is safe.

Drinking water standards: Drinking water standards are set by the USEPA by first identifying contaminants that may adversely affect public health and occur in drinking water frequently and at levels that pose a threat to public health. A maximum contaminant level will be set by the USEPA to specify the maximum permissible level of a contaminant in drinking water. These levels are enforceable standards, and are set based on the feasibility to manage the contaminants under the set levels.

Best Management Practices: BMPs are the most effective, practical means of preventing or reducing pollution from nonpoint sources.

Water quality monitoring: All water systems should be monitored regularly to ensure the water provided is safe. Each individual water system should submit samples of their water for laboratory testing.

Public Information: All USEPA reports and databases associated with drinking water are open access and the USEPA encourages public involvement in protecting drinking water quality.

For more information visit www.piecenter.com/pep.

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