

Rural Water Policy Advisory [7/24/2017]

Power of a (Texas) Association Comes to Washington:



Brian MacManus of the East Rio Hondo Water Supply Corporation [testifies](#) on behalf of the Texas Rural Water Association and the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) before the House of Representatives regarding “The State of Infrastructure in Rural America.” In addition to explaining the need for USDA rural water grants and loans, MacManus critiques the surface water treatment rule in the Q&A exchange ([video](#)).

Fixing EPA Technical Assistance Funding: On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Committee approved the fiscal year 2018 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [appropriations bill](#). After five years of working to fix EPA technical assistance by having Congress mandate that EPA fund programs small and rural communities find most beneficial – the committee passed that reform on Tuesday. Here is an excerpt from the bill:

"The bill provides \$12,700,000 for a competitive grant program to provide technical assistance for improved water quality or safe drinking water, adequate waste water to small systems or individual private well owners. The Agency shall provide \$10,000,000 for Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act, for activities specified under Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-1(e)(8))."

The Senate Follows the House and Declares Support and Funding for USDA’s Rural Water Initiatives: On Thursday, the Senate Committee on Appropriations approved the FY2018 agriculture appropriations bill and included funding for all the USDA Rural Water initiatives proposed to be eliminated in the President’s Budget ([more](#)). Here are some highlights of the bill:

- Loans & grants were funded at \$550,383,000 (\$571,190,000 last year).
- Circuit Rider funding was increased to \$18,000,000.
- Source Water Protection was funded at last year’s level (\$6.5 million).
- Wastewater Techs were funded at last year’s level (\$20,000,000).

See table comparing levels to House Committee-passed levels and last year’s levels ([NRWA funding table](#)).

Trump Administration Releases its First Unified Regulatory Agenda: The federal government’s [regulatory agenda announcement](#) includes current and anticipated regulatory actions. EPA’s agenda includes revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule with a proposed date of January 2018 and final rule proposed date of July 2019. Notably absent from the list is the perchlorate rule.

Florida Sinkhole Widens to 235 Feet ([news](#)).

EPA Offers Buyouts to 182 Workers in Chicago ([news](#)).

New EPA Attitude Could Help with Rural Water Regulatory Agenda: Several recent EPA actions demonstrate an increasing deference to state decisions on water quality standards under the Trump administration, part of what agency and state officials say is a shift to a more hands-off oversight approach if the agency believes a state's environmental program is generally sound. Kenneth Wagner, senior adviser to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt for regional and state affairs, said the agency would adopt a new “audit culture” approach that would avoid case-by-case reviews of state-issued permits or state-led enforcement actions if the agency generally believes a state's environmental programs are working. In Arkansas on July 20, Pruitt informed top state officials that for the first time since 2008, EPA had approved pending state water quality standards and lists of impaired waterbodies. NRWA's [May 15, 2017, comments](#) to EPA on Executive Order 13777, “Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda,” included the following request: *“The EPA should respect state crafted programs and the acceptable risk levels in those standards, especially when no contiguous state is challenging its neighboring state’s program.”*

National Rural Water Association

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The National Rural Water Association is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities

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