**Rural Water Policy Advisory 10/9/2017**

**Hurricane Watch**: Hurricane Nate weakens to a tropical storm after making U.S. landfall twice.  Alabama Power reported Sunday morning that about 59,000 customers were without power, 56,000 of which were in Mobile.  In Mississippi, 50,000 customers were without power.  More than 10,000 customers were affected by outages in the Florida panhandle.  At least 28 people were killed Thursday in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras.  Hundreds were rescued from floodwaters and mudslides.  Many lost power and running water. ([CNN](http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/08/us/hurricane-nate-landfall/index.html)).  PBS update on Puerto Rico’s recovery: 88% without power, 50% without water, and 80% of crops destroyed ([PBS](https://youtu.be/eSrJOvFzL_c?t=75)).

**PBS Special Feature, “[Rural] America Addicted”**: “The opioid crisis is devastating communities across the nation.  Overdose deaths are at record highs.  America’s communities weren’t built to handle the opioid crisis. Across the nation, public services, health care providers and civil servants are overwhelmed by the shared burden of addiction.  At their worst, opioids damage communities as severely as they damage individuals ([PBS](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/features/america-addicted/)).”

**NRWA Responds to EPA Investigator’s Review of EPA’s Public Notice Rules** ([more](http://ruralwater.org/docs/oig%20epa%20public%20notice.pdf)).

**Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report on EPA’s Oversight of Lead and Copper Rule (LCR)**: Effective LCR implementation is limited because EPA data is incomplete and some key data such as the presence of lead service lines are not reported ([GAO](http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-424?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)).

**Should EPA Start Giving Money to Low-income Customers to Help Pay for Water Bills?**: A U.S. Senator has asked NRWA for comments on a legislative proposal to initiate a new federal EPA “Low Income Water Consumer Assistance Program ([draft legislation](http://ruralwater.org/docs/ARP17183_XML.pdf)).”

**NRWA Asked by Senators to Respond to Private Water Proposals for New Federal Consolidation Policy**: Private water lobbyists have been urging Senators to create a new federal consolidation policy for small communities as past of the Senators’ soon-to-be introduced infrastructure legislation.  NRWA will be briefing the Senators this week, focusing on the “Fletcher Policy” that allows for local communities to retain authority over decisions of consolidation and privatization ([video](https://youtu.be/IpP2GvnowDg?t=1426) of President Fletcher's testimony).  At the annual NRWA conference in Reno in September, the NRWA Regulatory Committee also approved a motion “to raise principled concerns in opposition to the “Mandatory Consolidation” provision in U.S. House legislation, [H.R. 3387](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3387).  The committee identified several principled concerns including: current state authorities for condemnation and emergency authorities, limitations on due process for local governments, usurpation of local government authority, and respect for local democratic policies and processes.

**President Trump’s Legislative Team Meets with House Lawmakers at the White House on Thursday about the Administration’s Plan for Rebuilding U.S. Infrastructure**: The flurry of infrastructure meetings comes as lawmakers and stakeholders have been pressing the administration for more details about Trump’s long-awaited infrastructure package.  Representative Cheri Bustos (IL), one of the lawmakers invited to attend the White House’s Thursday morning meeting, said she presented the administration with bipartisan ideas aimed at improving rural infrastructure.

**Saint-Gobain to Pay $20M for Vermont Water Chemical Contamination**: Last Monday, a  Vermont court approved a settlement reached with the company over the contamination of private water wells with perfluorooctanoic acid, a suspected carcinogen.  The agreement requires the company to pay $20 million to extend municipal water lines to about 200 homes in the Bennington area ([settlement](https://anrweb.vt.gov/PubDocs/DEC/PFOA/Consent%20Order%20and%20Technical%20Documents/Consent%20Order/20171002%20Entry%20Order%20re%20CO.pdf)).

**NC Utility Head on Drinking Water -- “OK as Far as He Knows”**: The head of the agency providing drinking water to more than 200,000 people in and around Wilmington says unregulated and little-studied chemicals in the Cape Fear River don't make the water unsafe as far as he knows ([news](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/north-carolina/articles/2017-10-03/nc-utility-head-on-drinking-water-ok-as-far-as-he-knows)).

**California Proposes First-Ever Water Tax**: California’s Senate Bill 623 would generate $2 billion over the next 15 years to clean up contaminated groundwater and improve faulty water systems and wells—particularly in rural areas with agricultural runoff.  Under the proposed legislation, the tax on water (95 cents per month) would be for both homes and businesses if passed.  It also imposes fees on farms and dairies, roughly $30 million annually, to address some of the contamination caused by fertilizers and other chemicals ([news](http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/08/23/first-ever-tax-on-california-drinking-water-proposed-for-contaminated-groundwater-clean-up/)).

**Michigan Town Uncovers PFC Contamination 400 Times EPA-Advised Limits**: Belmont, MI is the latest town to uncover perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) in its water sources ([TV news](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uh9gBnzgJfw)).