

# Rural Water Issues Advisory [6/10/2019]

## Special Single Issue Edition: Source Water Protection

**USDA's NRCS Issues Guidance to State Conservationists and State Technical Committees on Preparing for Source Water Protection Activities By September 30, 2019:** The 2018 Farm Bill requires USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to encourage the protection of drinking water sources through their existing conservation programs. Farm Bill, Section 1244, provides that NRCS *must* encourage the protection of drinking water sources through dedicating at least 10 percent of the total funds available for conservation programs (with the exception of CRP), each year, beginning in FY 2019 through FY 2023, to be used for source water protection. In May, NRCS issued a [guidance document](#) to implement the new Farm Bill provision that directs state conservationists (working with the state technical committees, public water utilities and the state drinking water agency) to consider delineated source water protection assessments (conducted by state primacy agencies by the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act, SDWA) where agriculture is identified as a potential source of degradation of source water quality or availability and identify local priority areas to anticipate targeting approximately 10 percent of conservation program funding to benefit source water protection. The guidance directs the states to ensure that there is local support for implementation of voluntary adoption of conservation programs to protect source water when selecting priority areas. Additionally, the guidance directs state conservationists to provide a map and GIS layer of the selected local source water protection priorities by September 30, 2019.

**New Source Water Protection Provisions in the "America's Water Infrastructure Act":** The 1996 SDWA required states to develop source water assessments for public water systems. States were authorized to fund these activities using a 10% set-aside from their state revolving fund (SRF) grant for FY1996 and FY1997. The recently passed America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 ([AWIA](#); [P.L. 115-270](#)), enacted on October 23, 2018, removed the fiscal year limitation to use a portion of their SRF grant for source water assessments and authorizes states to fund implementation of surface drinking water sources protection efforts and activities from the 10% set-aside of a state's SRF grant ([AWIA, section 2020](#)).