



(6/22/16) Public Hearing  
Drinking Water Fee  
Deadline: 6/22/16 by 5:00pm



**CYNTHIA A. HARDING, M.P.H.**  
Interim Director

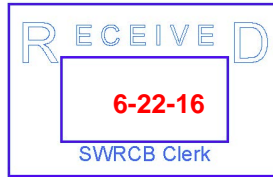
**JEFFREY D. GUNZENHAUSER, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Interim Health Officer

**ANGELO J. BELLOMO, REHS, QEP**  
Deputy Director for Health Protection

**TERRI S. WILLIAMS, REHS**  
Director of Environmental Health

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June 22, 2016

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

DAS-DrinkingWaterFees@waterboards.ca.gov

**Re: COMMENTS REGARDING PROPOSED DRINKING WATER FEE REGULATIONS**

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health Environmental Health Division (DPH-EH) is one of 30 Local Primacy Agencies (LPA) for the small public drinking water program. As an LPA, DPH-EH has delegated authority and responsibility for overseeing the delivery of safe drinking water for approximately 127 small public water systems throughout Los Angeles County. As the Director of Environmental Health, I am keenly aware of the challenges facing small public water systems, especially those serving disadvantaged communities. While I understand the need to maintain affordable fees, the fee structure as proposed would have tremendous negative impacts on our local program, as well as other LPA programs across the state, and small community systems in the counties served by other Local Primacy Agencies.

The state's proposed fee structure appears to be far less than the state's cost of providing mandated oversight services for small and severely disadvantaged communities. Apparently reserves from the Safe Drinking Water Account will be used to make up the difference for non-LPA county systems. Small and severely disadvantaged community systems in LPA counties, however, would not receive the benefit of the Safe Drinking Water Account offsets as the regulations are currently proposed. Without benefit of this funding for ALL small and severely disadvantaged communities systems statewide, a severe disparity will be introduced between LPA and non-LPA counties. Considering 30 counties are designated as the LPA, this will affect approximately half of the small drinking water systems in California.

DPH-EH would like to provide the State data collected and analyzed during the 2014-2015 fiscal year comprehensive review of the County of Los Angeles (County) LPA program. The goal of the review was to determine the appropriate staffing level and associated funding required to ensure that the County LPA program is in compliance with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Delegation Agreement and the LPA Annual Work Plan Agreement.

The County LPA program workload as outlined each fiscal year in the LPA Work Plan Agreement with the SWRCB includes but is not limited to inspections, enforcement, permitting, monitoring, surveillance, water quality evaluation, and data management. Therefore, to ensure that the deliverables of the LPA Annual Work Plan Agreement are met, the County program must be staffed appropriately. The current cost for the required County LPA program positions is approximately \$318,500.

The chart below provides the County budgeted classifications and associated cost for the LPA program positions.

CLASSIFICATION	POSITION COST	NUMBER OF STAFF	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT	PROGRAM COST
CHIEF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST	\$176,178	1	25%	\$44,045
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STAFF SPECIALIST	\$154,582	1	25%	\$38,646
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST III	\$146,782	1	100%	\$146,782
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TECHNICIAN	\$89,018	1	100%	\$89,018
TOTAL PROGRAM COST				\$318,491

As funding is not provided by the SWRCB, small water systems in Los Angeles County are required to pay a public health permit fee for the County to recover its costs for the program. Yet, the 2014-2015 LPA evaluation revealed that the County's current public health permit fees are insufficient to recover the full cost of the program. The County LPA program is offsetting the nearly \$193,150 annual deficit with resources from other DPH-EH programs. To correct this deficiency, DPH-EH is in the process of re-classifying the public health permit categories for small water systems and may be proposing a significant fee increase for the 2017-2018 fiscal year to fully offset the cost of the LPA program.

The chart below provides the current fee schedule and associated revenue for the LPA program.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	FEE	NUMBER OF SYSTEMS	TOTAL REVENUE
COMMUNITY	15-24 CONNECTIONS	\$1,103	16	\$17,648
	25-99 CONNECTIONS	\$1,233	20	\$24,660
	100-199 CONNECTIONS	\$1,363	12	\$16,356
NON-COMMUNITY NON-TRANSIENT	N/A	\$844	17	\$14,348
TRANSIENT	N/A	\$844	62	\$52,328
PROGRAM TOTAL REVENUE			127	\$125,340

Jeanine Townsend  
June 22, 2016  
Page 2 of 2

In summary, the proposed fee is not sufficient to cover the County cost of providing the mandated oversight services to small water systems. Adequate funding is a critical component for the success of an LPA program, a program that is able to meet all of its obligations to ensure that small public water systems deliver safe drinking water.

The County of Los Angeles and the other 29 LPA counties are valuable partners in providing safe drinking water to the public through local primacy delegation agreements. I stand ready to discuss options and opportunities with you to improve the proposed regulations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed fee regulations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Williams', with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Terri S. Williams, REHS  
Director of Environmental Health

TSW:vp

c: Jacqueline Taylor, Director, Bureau of Environmental Protection  
Scott Abbott, EH Services Manager, Bureau of Environmental Protection  
Lusi Mkhitarian, Chief EHS, Drinking Water Program