# Frequently Asked Questions:
## Public Water System Data on the Human Right to Water Portal

## 1. What is a public water system (PWS)?

A public water system provides water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances and has 15 or more service connections, or regularly serves at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year.

## 2. What is a community water system (CWS)?

A community water system is a PWS that serves at least 15 service connections used by yearlong residents, or regularly serves at least 25 yearlong residents of the area served by the system. These water systems primarily serve cities, neighborhoods, schools and businesses.

## 3. What is a non-community water system (NCWS)?

A non-community water system is a PWS that is not a CWS. Examples of a NCWS include gas stations, campgrounds and rest stops that have their own PWS.

## 4. What is a non-transient non-community water system (NTNCWS)?

A non-transient non-community water system is a PWS that is not a CWS and that regularly serves at least 25 of the same persons over six months per year. These types of water systems include hospitals, schools, factories and large airports to name a few.

## 5. Which state and local agencies regulate PWSs?

The State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board) Division of Drinking Water (DDW) regulates PWSs and oversees water recycling projects, permits water treatment devices, supports and promotes water system security and works closely with the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) on funding for PWSs. The DDW consists of three branches: the Northern California Field Operations Branch (FOB), the Southern California FOB and the

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Program Management Branch. Refer to this map for DDW district office locations and contact information.

For investor-owned public water utilities under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the CPUC has primary responsibility for the regulation of rates, terms of service and operations. The CPUC shares water quality regulatory authority (including compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act) with the State Water Board for its jurisdictional utilities.

At the local level, 30 of the 58 county environmental health departments in California, also known as Local Primacy Agencies (LPAs), have been delegated the State Water Board's authority to regulate all PWSs within their jurisdiction that have less than 200 service connections. Consequently, the CPUC shares water quality regulatory authority over small investor-owned water utilities (< 200 connections) with the applicable LPAs.

These 29 LPAs regulate small water systems to ensure that these systems deliver adequate and safe drinking water. FOB and Program Management staff work with LPA personnel by assisting with regulatory oversight, technical assistance and training. Click here for a map of the LPA counties or Click here for LPA contact information.

The LPA primacy counties are as follows: Alpine, Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Stanislaus, Tehama, Yolo, and Yuba.  For more information contact DDW's Primacy Liaison Unit at (916) 449-5158.

## 6. How can I learn more about my PWS?

The Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), accessible through DDW's Drinking Water Watch website, provides general information about California's public water systems. You can search for your system by name or ID number. Learn how to locate a PWS ID in question 7 below. Once you locate your system, you will see a link to "Consumer Confidence Reports" in the blue bar on the left-hand-side of the page. You may find past and recent reports from your PWS here. If you do not see a recent report, you may contact your PWS directly for a copy.

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## 7. What if I do not know which PWS provides my water?

The easiest way to determine your water supplier is to look at your bill. If you do not receive a bill, this may indicate that you are a renter and your landlord pays the bill, or that you are served by a private well or diversion and there is no regular billing for your water service.

Another way to determine the geographical area that each PWS serves and the system ID is as follows:

- Open the System Area Boundary Layer website

- Input desired address into the search box (located in the upper right hand of the page)

- If your address appears to have a color over it, click on the color layer. A information box with the city name, public water system number and other applicable information will appear. To see the overall system's boundary, zoom out to determine the water system(s) serving your location using the (-) symbol at the upper left corner of the map.

## 8. If I am not served by a PWS, how can I determine if my water is safe?

- If you are served by a very small water system that is not a PWS, you can talk with the individual that operates the system to find out more. Your county health department may also have information about the quality of water provided.

- If you have a private well, see the "A Guide for Private Domestic Well Owners" for more information: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/docs/wellowner_guide.pdf

## 9. If I am served by a tribal PWS, how can I determine if my water is safe?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has regulatory jurisdiction of all tribal lands. You can find more information on the USEPA Region 9 Tribal Program website, or the USEPA Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS - Federal) Search for Indian Tribes website.

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## 10. What data elements/criteria were used to obtain the Exceedance/Compliance Status data?

- Includes CWSs, and NCWSs that serve schools and day cares.

- Types of federal and state violations considered include those associated with an informal or formal enforcement action (EA) and related to either Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for primary drinking water standards, or Treatment Techniques (TT) requirements of the following: Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR), the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (ESWTR), the Long Term 1 ESWTR, the Long Term 2 ESWTR, and the Groundwater Rule (GWR).

- Does not include the following:

  o Violations of monitoring data not being reported, such that actual exceedance/compliance status is unknown at this time.

  o An exceedance of federal or state drinking water standard for which no enforcement action has been taken.

  o A total coliform violation and revised total coliform violation. These violations included in the dataset when the State Board adopts the California revised Total Coliform Rule (rTCR).

## 11. Define "In Compliance."

If a water system is "In Compliance" - indicated by a grey dot on the map - it means that the system is achieving compliance with the federal/state primary drinking water standards (i.e. MCL and TT requirements). For chronic contaminants, compliance is defined based on the running annual average (RAA), as specified in Section 64432 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).  For nitrate, compliance is based on quarterly monitoring as specified in Section 64432.1 of Title 22 of the CCR.  To find out more about the types of contaminants and their associated MCLs, refer to the table of Maximum Contaminant Levels and Regulatory Dates for Drinking Water.

There are certain state drinking water standards, such as perchlorate, which are more stringent than the federal drinking water standards.

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## 12. Define "Out-of-Compliance." Which types of violations are included in the query?

If a water system is "Out-of-Compliance" - indicated by a red star on the map - it means that the system is currently in violation of one or more federal/state primary or secondary drinking water standard (i.e. MCL and TT requirements) and an enforcement action has been taken.

## 13. Define "Returned to Compliance."

If a water system has returned to compliance since January 1, 2012 - indicated by a grey dot on the map – it means the water system now meets federal/state primary or secondary drinking water standards (i.e. MCL and TT requirements), but did not in the recent past.

## 14. What types of enforcement actions can be issued to a water system?

Each violation is associated with one or more of the enforcement action (EA) types listed below:

- **Formal EA Issued –** these are written documents issued to a water system. All documents must include a description of the specific provision of statute or regulation that has been violated, a citation of the applicable provision of statute or regulation, specific actions to be performed by the water system to return to compliance (i.e. directives), a compliance schedule, a summary of what will happen if the water system fails to comply with the directives (i.e. Civil Penalty Clause), and the date that the water system must be back in compliance (i.e. return to compliance date). Examples of a formal EA are a compliance order or citation.

- **Formal EA with Penalty Issued –** includes the same features of a Formal EA, plus a fine levied on the water system.

- **Informal EA Issued –** these are written documents issued to a water system that do not include all elements to meet USEPA's formal EA definition. An

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example of an informal EA is a notice of violation or enforcement action letter.

- **Return to Compliance –** means that the water system has returned back into compliance for the listed violation(s). Refer to Question 4 above for definition.

- **Other Informal EA Taken –** includes EAs that do not meet the USEPA's formal EA definition. Examples may include verbal actions or written documents, such as, but not limited to, a phone call, boil water orders, public notification issued, site visits and meetings.

- **No Longer Subject to Rule –** this is an EA that is associated to a violation(s) that is no longer subject to a specific rule. This action may be applied to the violation(s) if a water system was previously out-of-compliance for a rule that the state or USEPA deems no longer valid.

- **State Intentional No Action Taken –** this EA indicates that no further enforcement action was taken for an older corresponding violation(s) during a transition period of two rules that are overlapping in compliance determination.

- **California State Action Issued –** these are written documents issued to a water system for California MCL and/or TT violations only. Examples of these EAs include a compliance order or citation.

To learn more about potential health effects from long-term exposure to contaminants detected above the MCL, refer to the Table of Regulated Drinking Water Contaminants on the USEPA website.

## 15. How often are the Exceedance/Compliance Status data and maps updated?

Quarterly.

## 16. Is there a preferred web browser to view the map?

No. However, the map is designed to work on personal computers or tablets. Formatting may not work as intended on smaller displays such as smartphones.

## 17. Are all PWSs included on the map?

This map shows California's community water systems, schools and day cares. There are water systems that do not fit into either of these categories and are

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currently not incorporated into the dataset. Systems not shown on this map include most NCWSs in the state, very small systems (those serving fewer than 15 connections and fewer than 25 people year-round), tribal water systems, and private wells and diversions.

## 18. How are PWSs located on the map?

PWS location is currently based on the zip code of the water system's physical location (as opposed to the office location). Refer to the Drinking Water Watch website for the physical location of your water system.

## 19. Below are some basic pointers regarding how to use the map (search, zoom, turn off and on data layers, etc.)

Zoom into desired area and click on a star or dot to find out more.

- A grey dot indicates the system either has no history of violation or has returned to compliance since January 1, 2012

- A red star indicates the system is out-of-compliance. Violation codes can be viewed by clicking on "Show Related Records" in the pop-up window.

A pop-up box will appear that includes information regarding system compliance. If there are multiple systems in a given zip code, a range of numbers (e.g. 1 of 5) will show in the upper left hand corner of the pop-up box. Use the arrow to the right to search water systems located in the same zip code, and scroll down using the slide bar on the right hand side to view violation details.

The map is comprised of multiple data layers. To display a list of available layers, click on the icon in the upper-right-hand corner that looks like three layered squares.  You may turn on and off a layer by clicking in the check box next to the layer description.

## 20. How do I determine what enforcement action(s) are associated with a violation(s)?

This information can be found in the downloadable water data files on the Human Right to Water webpage under the Water Data tab; click on the Exceedance/Compliance Status of Public Water Systems (PWSs) Data (Excel Files) hyperlinks.

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## 21. How do I view my PWS's service area/boundary?

If you know your water system's identification (ID) number, type it in the search bar in the upper left-hand corner of the map and click the search button. The service area boundary will appear if the information is available. If you do not know your water system's ID number, click on the star or dot for your water system and copy and paste the "Water System No." shown in the pop-up box into the search bar in the upper left hand corner of the map. Click the search button.

The star or dot representing the water system may be located outside of the water system boundary. This is because the symbols are located based on zip code.

You can also turn on the PWS boundary layer of the map by following the directions in Question 4 above.

You can also go onto California GeoPortal - System Area Boundary Layer website   and download a service area boundary layer shape file in various formats.

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## 22. What if my address does not fall within one of the indicated PWS boundaries?

- Not all the boundaries are indicated; your water system's boundary may be missing.

- You may not be served by a PWS.

- If you think you are served by a PWS, but you cannot determine which one based on either your water bill or the Water Boundary tool, contact the State Water Board by email at hr2w@waterboards.ca.gov for assistance.

## 23. I am an advanced GIS user and would like to use the Exceedance/Compliance data layer in my own map products. How can I do so?

- The data is available as a map service at http://gispublic.waterboards.ca.gov/arcgis/rest/services/HR2W/Exceedance_Compliance/MapServer

- The data is available as a zipped shapefile "GIS Map Shapefile" under the Water Data Tab on the HR2W portal at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/index.html

## 24. How do I find out if my water system is receiving financial assistance to fix a water quality issue or to consolidate with another system?

The DFA administers the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Program to provide financial assistance to PWSs for drinking water infrastructure improvements in the form of low-interest loans, grants, and principal forgiveness.

Proposition 1, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014, allocates $260 million for drinking water grants and loans for PWS infrastructure improvements and related actions to meet safe drinking water standards and/or ensure affordable drinking water. These funds are administers through the DWSRF Program, allowing grant funds to be easily leveraged with low-interest financing available through the DWSRF Program.  For additional information about Proposition 1 funding, refer to the Proposition 1 – Drinking Water website. For quick access to funding information, click on the following hyperlinks:

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- [DWSRF Brochure](#)

- [DWSRF Application Status Report](#)

- [Proposition 1 Funding Status Report](#)

Per Proposition 1, the State Water Board is implementing a [multidisciplinary TA program](#) for small disadvantaged communities.  Additional information can be found on the [Proposition 1 TA Funding Program website.](#) To view a summary of systems currently receiving TA under the program, click on the links provided under the header *Approved TA Requests*.

# Division of Drinking Water Acronym List

## UNIT MEASURES

NTU – nephelometric turbidity units

ppm – parts per million (mg/L)

ppb – parts per billion (ug/L)

mg/L – milligrams per liter

ug/L – micrograms per liter

## ACRONYMS

CCR – California Code of Regulations

CEHTP - California Environmental Health Tracking Program

CWS – Community Water System

DDW – Division of Drinking Water

DDW – Division of Drinking Water

DFA – Division of Financial Assistance

DWSRF – Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

EA – Enforcement Action

ESWTR – Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule

FOB – Field Operations Branch (Northern and Southern; made up of 5 Regions w/ 22 Districts)

GWR – Ground Water Rule

ID - Identification

LPA – Local Primacy Agency – Dept. Delegated Local Health Officer (e.g. County)

MCL – Maximum Contaminant Level

NCWS – Non-community Water System

NTNCWS – Non-transient Non-community Water System

PWS – Public Water System

RAA – Running Annual Average

SDWIS – Safe Drinking Water Information System (National database of Water system information)

SWRCB – State Water Resources Control Board (a.k.a. State Water Board)

SWTR – Surface Water Treatment Rule

TT – Treatment Techniques

USEPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency

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