

Agenda for Public Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment

Providing abundant, safe drinking water to residents is one of the primary duties of local governments. Treating wastewater and returning clean water to the natural environment is also an essential role of the public sector. TMACOG and its members support the professional staff who create and monitor the systems that provide water delivery and treatment and help them in their work with training and by providing a forum for information-sharing. TMACOG supports policies and funding solutions that increase professional capacity and fund necessary infrastructure.

Recommended Policies for Public Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment

State and Federal

- Support the development of a nutrient trading program to reduce phosphorus loadings. Local wastewater facilities have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to reduce pollutants reaching Lake Erie through treatment and sewer system improvements. Additional infrastructure investments may yield diminishing returns as projects eliminate ever smaller sources of pollution. It may be more cost-effective for funding to be applied to non-point source and habitat projects in the watershed.
- Support the Ohio EPA's Water Resources Restoration Sponsor program that uses publicly owned treatment works partnerships for clean water.
- Support efforts by individual water systems to collaborate in the preparation of Source Water Protection Plans. Pollution sources that affect water supplies often originate in neighboring communities or upstream watersheds outside the water system's jurisdiction and control. Funding regional efforts is cost-effective and recognizes the regional nature of the problems.
- All water systems are required to conduct public education and outreach and to publish an annual Consumer Confidence Report, which details performance results. Support the efforts of water system professionals to conduct proactive educational programs to raise the public's understanding of the public water supply and how the water utility assures its safety.

Regional

- Promote and support resource sharing between jurisdictions. Operating a water system requires specialized equipment, software, and personnel. Local governments can work together and save money by sharing resources.
- Support the mission of water service providers in the TMACOG region to collaborate to create and maintain an inventory of water supply infrastructure. A system inventory would facilitate emergency water supplies and serve as a resource for asset management planning.

Funding

- Support water trust funds. A water trust could provide a funding source for water infrastructure (water supply, sanitary sewerage, stormwater, green infrastructure and other projects that improve water quality). A trust would augment the federal water and wastewater State Revolving funds. Any trust fund must include a mechanism to ensure that funds will be used in a timely manner for intended purposes. The funding sources should come from taxes or fees on goods and services related to a clean water issue – e.g., beverage containers, pharmaceuticals, or fertilizers and pesticides.
- Support state and federal grants and financing for infrastructure addressing water supply treatment and distribution, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.
- Provide information on financing and rate structuring mechanisms for capital improvements addressing public water supply and distribution, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.
- Local governments have a responsibility to ensure a safe and plentiful water supply through water/wastewater management despite high loadings of phosphorus from the water sheds and microcystin in Maumee Bay and Lake Erie. Recognize this financial burden and support full funding for advanced treatment equipment, personnel, and chemicals.
- Fund and support development of training programs that provide continuing education credit for professional engineers, planners, and water/wastewater treatment plant operators.

