

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

First Reader

House Bill 1128

(Prince George's County Delegation and Montgomery
County Delegation)

Environment and Transportation

**Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission - Drinking Water - Testing
PG/MC 113-16**

This bill alters the basis for which the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) must conduct quarterly testing of drinking water for unregulated contaminants. Under the bill, the testing must be based on the latest cycle of unregulated contaminant monitoring regulations established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency instead of the third cycle of regulations.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: No effect on WSSC expenditures. WSSC currently spends approximately \$8,000 on water sample testing and monitoring costs at four water systems within the commission. These costs continue under the bill.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 127 of 2013 required WSSC to conduct quarterly testing of drinking water for unregulated contaminants included in specified federal regulations. Within 30 days of receiving results that indicate the presence of a contaminant, WSSC must report the results to the county executives of Montgomery and Prince George's counties and publish the results on the WSSC website.

The federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to issue a list of up to 30 unregulated contaminants to be monitored by public water systems. The list is required to be updated every five years. In May 2012, the most recent update of the list was finalized and contains 30 chemicals, metals, hormones, and viruses, as well as new monitoring and reporting requirements.

State drinking water quality regulations require water suppliers in Maryland to conduct monitoring of the federally listed contaminants in accordance with SDWA regulations. State regulations also require the owners or operators of specified water systems to send to the Maryland Department of the Environment a copy of monitoring results within 30 days of receipt. The owners must also notify persons served by the systems of the availability of the results in the first set of water bills issued after receipt of the results or through written notice within three months after receipt of the results.

Background: WSSC is among the largest water and wastewater utilities in the country, providing water and sewer services to 1.8 million residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. It has more than 460,000 customer accounts, serves an area of around 1,000 square miles, and currently employs more than 1,500 people. The commission operates three reservoirs, two water filtration plants, and six wastewater treatment plants. The six wastewater treatment facilities, as well as the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, handle more than 200 million gallons of wastewater per day. The commission maintains nearly 5,600 miles of water main lines and nearly 5,500 miles of sewer main lines.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery and Prince George's counties, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Department of Legislative Services

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