

## **New Data, New Strategies: The Emerging Issues for Drinking Water**

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New water quality data in Oregon and across the country helps make the case for the need to focus more attention on preventing contamination rather than relying on treatment to remove it downstream. In most states, the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) are not implemented by the same agencies. This presentation will begin with a brief discussion of the importance of those regulatory authorities and how the SDWA drinking water regulations have significantly changed over the past few years. When implementing any water resource *protection* program, it is critical to establish and actively promote the statutory authorities for that protection. Using Oregon drinking water as an example, we'll look at how SDWA and CWA can be used to prevent or reduce contamination in rivers, streams, and groundwaters.

In Oregon, there are approximately 2,500 discreet source areas supplying both surface water and groundwater-sourced public water systems. These areas are mapped and available to other organizations and resource consultants through Department of Environmental Quality GIS services. Most importantly, these source areas have been ranked into high, moderate, and lower risk categories for contamination. These groupings are used to prioritize pollution prevention activities, grant funding, coordination with other agencies, and toxics monitoring. The methods used in the ranking process will be summarized, as this may be useful in other water resource applications.

The fundamental driver of change in many water quality programs at this time is new and "emerging" data. As an example, the data from the recent 2008 Oregon Drinking Water Source Monitoring Project will be presented. The rivers and groundwater sources for 13 high-risk public water systems were sampled for a wide variety of toxics, pesticides, and non-regulated contaminants. Data from this Oregon project will be compared to national and Northwest-specific data from U.S. Geological Survey's monitoring programs that address emerging contaminants.

There are also several important converging issues that serve as a basis for strategic planning for drinking water protection in Oregon. Given the limited resources to implement prevention-focused work, it is critical to leverage our efforts with programs that have similar priorities and goals. We will share several examples of how this approach is effective in reducing risks to Oregon's public water supplies.

### **Sheree Stewart**

Sheree Stewart is currently the Drinking Water Protection Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in Portland. She attended the U.S. Naval Academy, the University of Texas, and the University of California/Santa Barbara, earning degrees in Geology and Environmental Sciences. In 25 years of professional experience in the environmental field, she has worked both in the public and private sectors, including the U.S. Geological Survey and HDR Engineering. At Oregon DEQ, her responsibilities have included serving as the Senior Hydrogeologist or Project Manager for 15 hazardous waste contamination cleanup sites in Oregon, co-authoring guidance manuals for drinking water protection, risk analysis, developing annual strategic plans, and coordinating program implementation. In addition to the professional work associated with water quality and environmental protection, Sheree also devotes substantial time toward teaching geology and leading outdoor trips as a naturalist for river rafting expeditions in Idaho and Oregon.