

Recreational Drinking Water System Requirements

Kathleen Snodgrass, Project Leader; Terri Anderson and Samantha Lidstrom, Project Assistants

Highlights...

- Drinking water laws and requirements are complex.
- Operators of very small drinking water systems may not be aware of all requirements.
- A template document was developed to help operators know what is required.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service policy states that all agency-owned drinking water systems will be operated in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act <<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/sdwa>> and the requirements of the State in which each system is located. This policy applies to Forest Service-owned water systems that are operated by permittees, as well as those operated by Forest Service personnel. This guidance is contained in Forest Service Manual chapter 7420 <<http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsm/7400/7420.doc>>. Requirements for Forest Service-owned drinking water systems (figure 1) change over time as new laws and regulations are implemented to assure the safety of drinking water.



Figure 1—Forest Service recreation site visitors have trusted their drinking water to be safe since the early 1900s. These young women enjoyed a refreshing drink from a water fountain at the Verlot Campground in the Darrington Ranger District, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Pacific Northwest Region in the 1940s.

As regulatory requirements for drinking water systems increase in abundance and complexity, it can be difficult for recreation water system operators, especially permittees, to determine what to do to make sure they are in compliance and are providing safe drinking water for their customers. Most of these small recreation water systems are categorized as either “Public Transient Non-Community” or “Non-Public Transient” (figure 2). The requirements for testing and monitoring these systems are similar but not identical.

When the requirements for a particular system are explained to the operator clearly and concisely, compliance tends to be better. The Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) has developed a template document that can be easily modified/completed by the facilities or environmental engineer to suit the circumstances of each

individual water system. The document “Operation, Maintenance, and Monitoring Requirements for Recreation Area Drinking Water Systems Supplied by a Groundwater Well” will help the operators of small drinking water systems understand the requirements. The completed document can be delivered to the permittee/system operator either with the site permit or separately. Use of the document isn’t mandatory, but if it’s used, the facilities or environmental engineer should update it whenever requirements change.

Sections of the document should be modified based on the specifics of the system. Orange text inside orange square brackets ([]) indicates a word or phrase to be chosen. It also is used to explain how to modify the document to match the specifics of the system and also to denote where information must be added. The document doesn’t include

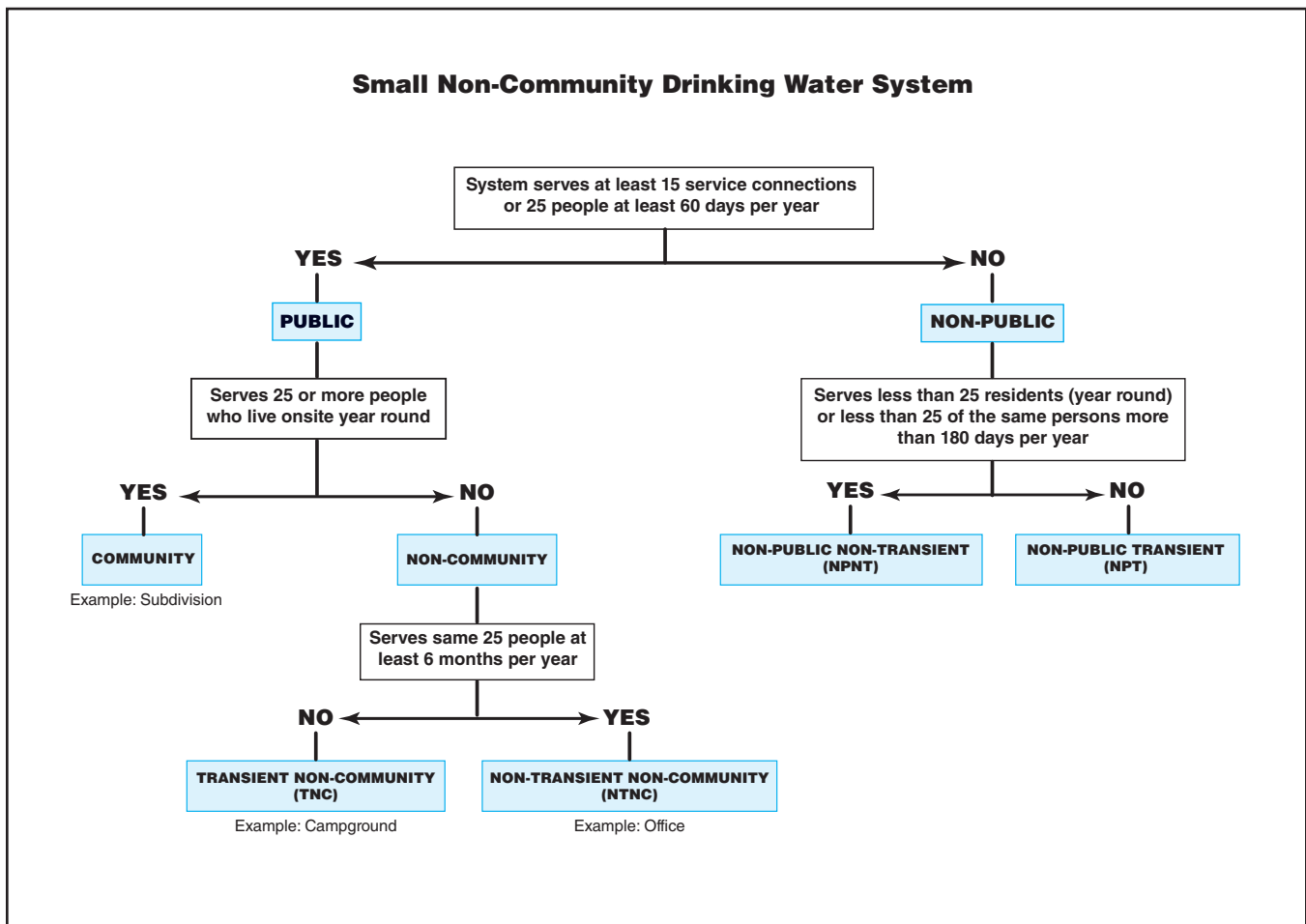


Figure 2—Use this flowchart to determine the regulatory category of a Forest Service-owned water system.

much background, but does include links to more detailed information about requirements. It is available to Forest Service employees electronically at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/eng/programs/water/documents/1173-2WO1_508_RecWaterReq.docx>.

Concessionaires and permittees are more likely to comply with drinking water system operation and monitoring requirements if they don't have to dig through innumerable Web sites and documents to find the laws and regulations that apply to their specific Forest Service-owned water system. The document "Operation, Maintenance, and Monitoring Requirements for Recreation Area Drinking Water Systems Supplied by a Groundwater Well" can help system operators do their job more efficiently while providing safe water at recreation sites (figure 3).



Figure 3—The Forest Service owns many drinking water systems at recreation sites. The water faucet shown above is at the Sunshine Campground in the Norwood Ranger District, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, Rocky Mountain Region.

About the Authors

Terri Anderson worked for MTDC during a detail in August and September 2010. She graduated from Montana State University in 1986 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. After college, she worked for the Bureau of Reclamation on the Buffalo Bill Power Plant and Dam Modifications in Cody, WY. She has worked for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and as a consulting engineer in western Colorado. Anderson currently works for the Forest Service in Hamilton, MT.

Samantha Lidstrom joined MTDC in July 2008 as a student temporary employee assisting in research and publications for the engineering program. Lidstrom is a Missoula native and is a civil engineering student at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT.

Kathleen Snodgrass came to MTDC as a project leader in 2001. She graduated from Washington State University in 1974 with a bachelor's degree in architectural studies and then spent about 10 years in highway design and construction with the Idaho Division of Highways. She began her career with the Forest Service in 1984. Snodgrass worked in facilities, landscape architecture, land line, and general engineering on the Nez Perce National Forest for around 10 years, and she was the forest's facilities architect for about 7 years before coming to MTDC.

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Library Card

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Keywords: bacteria, chlorine, concessionaires, coliform, contaminants, disinfect, environmental engineers, facilities, groundwater, Forest Service, maintenance, nitrates, nitrites, permittees, potable water, public safety, recreation sites, system operators, regulations, sanitary, water systems



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USDA Forest Service
Missoula Technology and Development Center
5785 Hwy. 10 West
Missoula, MT 59808–9361
Phone: 406–329–3900
Fax: 406–329–3719
Email: wo_mtdc_pubs@fs.fed.us

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