

Alabama's 2008 Triennial Capacity Development Report

In accordance with Section 14-20(b)(2) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the following Capacity Development Report summarizes Alabama's efforts to address the capacity development capabilities of the state's public drinking water systems, both new and existing, through FY 2008.

The Drinking Water Program in Alabama has a long history of working with the state's public drinking water systems to improve overall operation. Despite these efforts some systems continue to have difficulties maintaining compliance with State and Federal regulations. In most cases, non-viable water systems are those systems with insufficient resources to maintain adequate service to their customers and/or to comply with State and Federal requirements. When necessary, the Department has encouraged the consolidation of these non-viable water systems with other viable water systems. Alabama realized long ago that a water system with inadequate resources will have difficulty meeting its obligations. EPA has reached the same conclusion, resulting in Federal requirements that all states develop criteria to evaluate a water system's capacity development capabilities.

For existing water systems, Alabama meets the Federal capacity development requirements by evaluating a non-compliant water system's technical, managerial and financial capabilities. The ultimate goal is to either improve the system's operation or to inactivate the system (i.e., merge the system into another viable system). All water systems are inspected every three years. When problems arise,

additional inspections are conducted to evaluate viability of the system. Assessing the technical and operational capability of water systems on a regular basis, identifying potential problems, providing assistance and conducting follow-up inspections are the first steps in a chain of events that ultimately leads to either improving the operation or inactivation of marginally maintained water systems.

The same criteria are also used when evaluating the capacity development capabilities of proposed new water systems. Preliminary engineering reports for new water systems must be submitted by the proposed system's engineer for review and concurrence by the Department. These reports must address and confirm the proposed system's technical, managerial, and financial ability to provide and sustain adequate service to its customers. Those facilities that cannot demonstrate this capability are denied issuance of a permit.

As a result of this approach, the number of non-viable water systems in Alabama continues to decrease. Since the last triennial report in 2005, a total of twenty-five public drinking water systems in Alabama have been inactivated. Twelve of these inactivated systems were community water systems and thirteen were non-community water systems. Thirteen of Alabama's public drinking water systems have been in significant non-compliance since 2005. Eleven of these compliance issues were related to new regulations regarding disinfection byproducts. These water systems are on or will be on a compliance schedule. Two water systems did not meet the state's sampling and monitoring requirements. The Department will

work with these systems to put them on compliance schedules. Alabama's capacity development program assures better water quality, improves customer service and increases revenues, thus allowing expansion of services to customers needing (or desiring) public water. It is important to note that the reduction in the number of non-viable water systems has not curtailed the expansion of water service.

Over the last three years, the Department has worked with a private contractor to evaluate the technical, managerial, and financial capabilities of twelve of the state's public drinking water systems, each with past compliance problems. Those water systems are: Camp Hill Utilities Board (AL0001270), Crossville Water Board (AL0000508), East Brewton Water and Sewer Board (AL0000558), Fords Valley and Hwy 278 Water Cooperative (AL0000575), Lexington Water Works Board (AL0000558), Newton Water Works Board (AL0000439), Old Suggsville Water and Fire Protection Authority (AL0001722), Spanish Fort Water System (AL0001727), Town Creek Water System (AL0000800), Wilcox County Water System (AL0001371) and York Water System (AL0001223). These evaluations have uncovered problems such as: excessive water loss, delinquent accounts, poorly organized or missing records and plans required by regulation, and source water issues such as potential contamination or insufficient capacity. The contractors worked closely with the systems to correct the deficiencies which included attending board meetings, setting up notebooks which contain all required records and plans, developing source water assessments and sampling plans, and conducting rate studies and extensive leak surveys. The results of their efforts included increased

compliance rates, reduction in water loss, greater financial stability, and more reliable sources of water.

ADEM's Drinking Water Branch continues to meet regularly with representatives from the USDA Rural Development Agency, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, the Rural Community Assistance Program, and the Alabama Rural Water Association (ARWA). During these routine meetings, the technical, managerial or financial capacity of proposed new water systems and proposed expansions of existing water systems are discussed. Communication with these groups has discouraged the construction of non-viable new water systems and the expansion of marginally operated existing water systems.

Also over the last three years, in cooperation with the ARWA, the Department has participated in training sessions for board members, certified operators, and other personnel of Alabama's public drinking water systems. Topics in these training sessions included: establishment of water system legal policies, legal liabilities of board members, operation and maintenance of water distribution systems, computer training, and regulatory updates. These training sessions have significantly contributed to the improvement of many of the state's public drinking water systems with respect to capacity development.

In conclusion, over the last 30 years, Alabama has diligently pursued efforts to improve the capacity development capabilities of the state's public drinking water

systems. As a result, the number of non-viable water systems in the state has been reduced with a corresponding reduction in the number of regulatory violations reported each year. ADEM is committed to continue to promote and implement programs to address the capacity development capabilities of the state's public water systems.