

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1947

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environment & Energy

Title: An act relating to reducing satellite management agency requirements for simple group B public water systems.

Brief Description: Reducing satellite management agency requirements for simple group B public water systems.

Sponsors: Representatives Engell, Springer, Ley, Schmick, Abell and Couture.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment & Energy: 2/17/25, 2/20/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows new Group B public water systems to not be owned or operated by a satellite system management agency if the water system meets certain requirements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Doglio, Chair; Hunt, Vice Chair; Dye, Ranking Minority Member; Klicker, Assistant Ranking Member; Abbarno, Abell, Barnard, Berry, Duerr, Fey, Fitzgibbon, Kloba, Ley, Mena, Mendoza, Ramel, Stearns, Street, Stuebe, Wylie and Ybarra.

Staff: Matt Sterling (786-7289).

Background:

Drinking Water System Regulation.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the federal law that ensures the quality of drinking water supplied by public water systems serving at least 15 connections or 25 individuals. Under the SDWA, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies drinking water contaminants to be regulated, sets standards for drinking water quality, and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards. The SDWA requires water systems to take actions to protect drinking water sources, deliver water that meets maximum contaminant levels established by EPA regulation, and undertake other measures as needed to ensure that water delivered to customer taps does not contain high levels of certain contaminants.

Under the SDWA, state regulatory agencies are the regulators generally responsible for implementing drinking water standards and for direct oversight of the operation of public water systems. Any state-adopted drinking water regulations must be no less stringent than the federal drinking water regulations adopted by the EPA. The Department of Health (DOH) implements the state's drinking water program mandated by the federal SDWA and state laws. The DOH may establish standards for allowable concentrations of chemical contaminants which constitute a threat to public health.

Public Water Systems.

Under state law, public water systems are divided into either Group A or Group B systems. Group A systems are public water systems that meet one of three criteria:

- feature 15 or more service connections;
- serve an average of 25 or more people per day for at least 60 days a year, regardless of the number of service connections; or
- serve 1,000 or more people for two consecutive days.

Group B systems encompass all other public water systems. Local health jurisdictions may adopt and implement their own Group B system regulations, so long as they are no less stringent than the rules set forth by the DOH. When a public water system is determined by the DOH or a local health department to be out of compliance with water quality standards, the water system owner must take action to bring the water system into full compliance to abate an immediate public health threat.

Satellite System Management Agencies.

The Secretary of the DOH adopts rules establishing criteria for designating individuals or water purveyors as qualified satellite system management agencies. A satellite system management agency is a person or entity that is certified by the Secretary to own or operate more than one public water system on a regional or countywide basis, without the necessity for a physical connection between such systems. The criteria establishes minimum standards for designation as a satellite system management agency qualified to assume ownership or operation of an existing or proposed public water system.

Summary of Bill:

New Group B public water systems are not required to be owned or operated by a satellite system management agency unless the water system:

- is required to provide treatment to meet water quality standards;
- provides fire flow;
- has atmospheric storage; or
- serves 10 or more service connections.

The local health jurisdiction may adopt more stringent satellite management system requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Back in 2014, the rules adopted for Group B water systems gave the option for local health districts to take over management of these small water systems of up to 14 connections to set standards for water testing, but they maintained the requirement that a satellite management agency (SMA) own or operate the system. The SMA's primary job is to report to the DOH. However, there is a shortage of people who are certified by the DOH to do this work, and it can be very difficult to find an SMA for some of these water systems. For some of these small systems, there is not very much for the SMA to do, so the testing is often conducted by members of the water system and then those test results are given to the SMA. This bill just eliminates the necessity of having an agent in the middle, being paid money and not doing very much. The bill would maintain the SMA requirement for more complex systems and would reserve that right for local health jurisdictions to adopt more stringent requirements if they determine it is necessary. Atmospheric storage refers to when water is stored in a way that it contacts the atmosphere or the air. For instance, if there is an above ground storage tank or anywhere where air could come in contact with the water, that's a potential contamination point, and those systems would still be required to have a satellite management agency under the bill. The water systems this bill are focused on typically consist of a well in a pressure tank so the water never comes in contact with the air. It is a very low risk system that typically has very low testing requirements.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Andrew Engell, prime sponsor; Wes McCart; and Jaime Bodden, WSALPHO.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.