



Drinking Water Distribution, Ground Water Assessment and Treatment Guidance

Consultation process

Through the Winter of 2015 the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) is holding two information webinars, followed by four workshops across the province to:

- Communicate the purpose, development history and current content of three guidance documents;
- Hear and seek considered comment from British Columbians with an interest in drinking water distribution, ground water assessment and treatment; and
- Communicate to stakeholders the Ministry's planned next steps in refining and implementing the guidance documents.

Guidance documents

The Ministry – with support of the regional health authorities – has prepared three draft guidance documents as part of the Ministry's Drinking Water Program:

- *Guidance Document for Determining Ground Water at Risk of Containing Pathogens (GARP) version 2;*
- *Drinking Water Treatment Objectives (Microbiological) for Ground Water Supplies in British Columbia version 1;* and
- *British Columbia Guidelines (Microbiological) for Maintaining Water Quality within Distribution Systems – Secondary Disinfection.*

During their preparation the three draft documents received varying levels of technical input from industry and municipal representatives, provincial Ministry and health authority staff. The documents are now being released for wider public consultation.

Providing comment

The three guidance documents, comment forms and additional information are provided on the Ministry's [consultation website](#), along with instructions for submitting your comments.

If you are interested in receiving information about scheduled consultation events or providing comments on the draft guidance documents, please contact Cindy Bertram of C. Rankin & Associates who has been contracted to manage consultation logistics and comments, at:

Email: cindybertram@shaw.ca

Mail: PO Box 28159 Westshore RPO
Victoria B.C. V9B 6K8

The Ministry welcomes all submissions or comments related to the guidance documents. These may be submitted by email or mail.

Comments should be submitted by:
March 15, 2015.

Comments or submissions are welcomed and will be reviewed by the Ministry as the guidance documents are refined. All submissions will be reviewed for inclusion without attribution in a consultation summary report following the consultation period. Please note that comments you provide and information that identifies you as the source of those comments may be publicly available if a Freedom of Information request is made under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The Ministry will consult further with stakeholders as the guidance documents are implemented.

Legislative context for the guidance documents

Provincial legislative requirements and supporting information relevant to the guidance documents are set out in the *Drinking Water Protection Act*, *Drinking Water Protection Regulation*, *Water Act*, *Ground Water Protection Regulation*, *Public Health Act*, and *Health Hazards Regulation*.

Ministry of Health drinking water program

The drinking water program is administered locally by drinking water officers, public health engineers, environmental health officers and medical health officers, who are responsible for direct service delivery in B.C.'s health authorities. Drinking water officers provide surveillance and monitoring of drinking water systems that may affect the public's health.

The goal of the program is to ensure safe, reliable and accessible drinking water for all British Columbians. Through the program, the Ministry works to:

- Develop provincial legislation, guidelines and policies on drinking water.
- Ensure that drinking water interests are considered in broader government policy and administration.
- Act as a resource for health authorities to help provide a consistent approach to the administration of the [Drinking Water Protection Act](#) and the [Drinking Water Protection Regulation](#).
- Facilitate the co-ordination of provincial drinking water training initiatives.
- Liaise and co-ordinate provincial initiatives that may impact drinking water, and consult with drinking water suppliers, educational providers, water associations and other stakeholders on current drinking water issues.

Purpose and background of the guidance documents

Drinking water can be at risk of contamination by pathogens harmful to human health, and for many drinking water systems treatment is required. The *Drinking Water Protection Act* and Regulation establish a minimum required level of water quality, however, the specific forms of treatment that might be required of a water system also depend on mitigating hazards in addition to addressing the microbiological quality of the drinking water source. A designated health officer can include specific treatment requirements in the conditions of a water system's construction or operating permit, respectively, to ensure safe drinking water.

The guidance documents being presented by the Ministry have been prepared to support the development of these treatment requirements on a case-by-case basis for all drinking water supply systems in B.C.

1. *Guidance Document for Determining Ground Water at Risk of Containing Pathogens (GARP) version 2*

The purpose of this document is to assist drinking water officers in determining whether a ground water source is "at risk" or "at low risk" of containing pathogens, based on an assessment completed by the water supplier. A qualified professional may need to be retained for aspects of the assessment. Water suppliers may wish to self-assess their ground water source using this procedure, in consultation with a drinking water officer.

The first version of this document was released by the Ministry in 2012 and has undergone a number of revisions since that time based on stakeholder feedback and a technical review.

2. *Drinking Water Treatment Objectives (Microbiological) for Ground Water Supplies in British Columbia version 1*

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the treatment objectives expected to be achieved for a ground water source to be considered potable. Ground water supplies determined to be at risk of containing pathogens must be disinfected by treatment methods equivalent to surface water supplies. Subsurface filtration is recognized as a potential treatment method.

The document was developed through consultation and a focused technical review, and is now ready for review and comment by a broader group of stakeholders prior to its release for general use. It is considered a supplementary document to the [Drinking Water Treatment Objectives \(Microbiological\) for Surface Water Supplies in British Columbia](#), providing guidance specific to the unique characteristics of ground water sources.

3. *British Columbia Guidelines (Microbiological) for Maintaining Water Quality within Distribution Systems – Secondary Disinfection*

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to drinking water officers and water suppliers when making decisions related to the need for secondary disinfection. Secondary disinfection protects and maintains microbiological water quality within water supply distribution systems for both surface water and groundwater sources. As a newly developed policy document, this will be its first external review.