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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EPA Grants Alaska Primacy for Drinking Water

On August 9, 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) granted the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) full primacy for ten federal drinking water rules giving Alaska's environmental health drinking water program primary responsibility for enforcing the federal rule's requirements.

"Alaskans have a right to safe drinking water. They also have a right to regulations that make sense," said DEC Commissioner Larry Hartig. "Drinking water primacy means that Alaskans can expect healthy water, and rules that recognize and pay attention to Alaska conditions."

State authorization to administer and enforce the federal rules helps public water systems better address problems that can be compounded by Alaska conditions, such as extremely remote locations, prolonged winter weather, and widespread limitations on transportation.

"Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility is extremely pleased the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has obtained full primacy for rules that are of particular interest to the utility and our customers," said General Manager Mark Premo, P.E. "State oversight by DEC is an important victory for communities in Alaska because of the many unique environmental characteristics which exist in our state."

In addition to restricting contaminants such as bacteria, viruses and chemicals, State regulations also uphold the public's right to know about the quality of the water they drink. This is especially important for public water systems with compliance problems, or potentially unsafe situations (such as water contaminated through natural disasters, like flooding). Alaska regulations also require a public water system to issue annual reports to consumers about water quality.

Alaska's drinking water program first gained primacy from EPA in 1978. Since then, DEC has revised its regulations for each new rule to maintain overall primacy status.

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