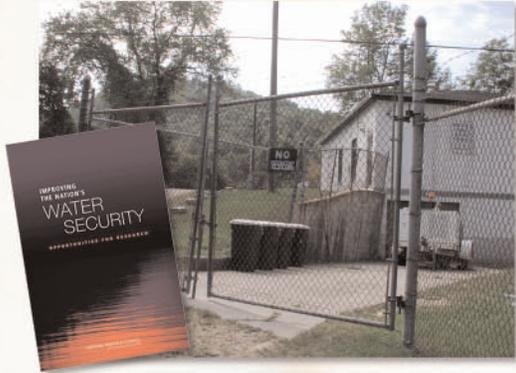


Drinking Water Security Back in the News



Over the last few months, information about drinking water security has appeared in several different places.

In May 2007, the National Research Council (NRC) released *Improving the Nation's Water Security: Opportunities for Research*, an assessment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) water security program. According to the report, the biggest problem with water security is that utilities that need information about security issues can't always get it.

The NRC report called on EPA to develop a strategic plan to articulate its mission and objectives and "improve its approaches to information dissemination using both security specific communication mechanisms and broadly applicable portal technology."

Earlier in the year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security certified Hach's early warning system, the first water security product to achieve such a distinction based on 2002 SAFETY Act stipulations. The warning system can detect and identify a range of toxins, including cyanide and ricin, as well as things like arsenic and pesticides, and alert operators.

Finally, EPA finalized their Water Contaminant Information Tool. This online database—available only after receiving a password from the agency—provides information about chemical, biological, and radiological contaminants. EPA intends this information to help in responding to specific threats and incidents, and for developing emergency response plans and vulnerability assessments.

The report *Improving the Nation's Water Security: Opportunities for Research* may be downloaded free from the NRC Web site at http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11872.

Learn more about GuardianBlue on the Hach Web site at www.hach.com.

Find out more about EPA's Water Contaminant Information Tool by visiting www.epa.gov/wcit/.

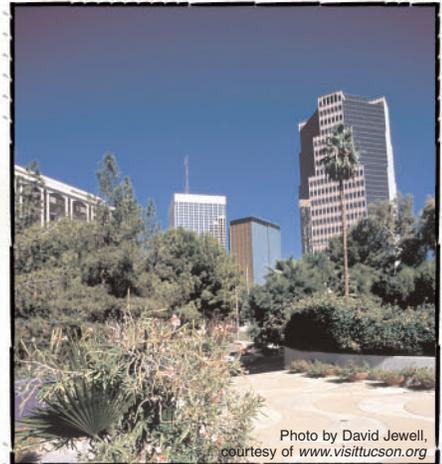


Photo by David Jewell, courtesy of www.visittucson.org

Education Boosts Conservation

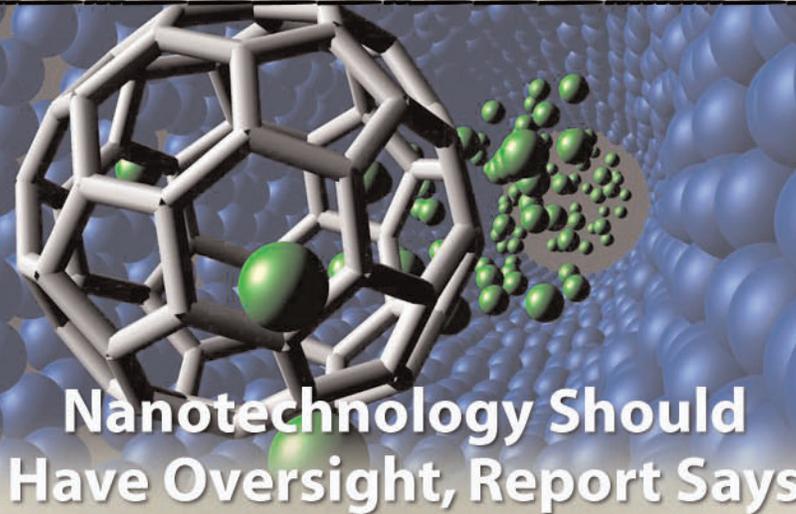
Between the 1980 and 2000 Census, Tucson, Arizona grew from 330,000 to more than 500,000 people. Despite this surge in population, residents are using less water.

A May *U.S. Water News Online* article reports that between January 1 and April 30, 2007, the 225,600 homes and businesses served by Tucson Water used seven percent less water than the same time period the year before. This decrease follows a yearly drop of more than five percent between 2005 and 2006.

Tucson Water officials credit a public awareness campaign coupled with an ongoing drought for the drop in water use.

Learn more about Tucson's conservation program on the city's Web site at www.ci.tucson.az.us/water/conservation.htm.





Nanotechnology Should Have Oversight, Report Says

Nanotechnology entails the measurement, prediction, and construction of materials on the scale of atoms and molecules. A nanometer is one-billionth of a meter, and nanotechnology typically deals with particles and structures larger than one nanometer but smaller than 100 nanometers. To put this into perspective, the width of a human hair is approximately 80,000 nanometers. A nanometer-sized particle is about three times the diameter of a gold atom and a very small fraction of the size of a living cell. Such a particle can be seen only with the most powerful microscopes.

Because new nanomaterials and nanotechnology products are entering the market each week, regulatory oversight of these technologies is urgently needed and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should act now, reports a May 2007 study from the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, a partnership between the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

In *EPA and Nanotechnology: Oversight for the 21st Century*, J. Clarence (Terry) Davies, former EPA assistant administrator for policy, planning and evaluation, describes ways to better handle the challenges of nanotechnology. The report sets out an agenda for creating an effective oversight system necessary to identify and minimize any adverse effects of nano materials and products on health or the environment.

"For over 30 years, the EPA has dealt with the impacts of the last industrial revolution—the internal combustion engine, steam-generated electricity, and basic chemical synthesis," observes William D. Ruckelshaus, former EPA administrator from 1970 to 1973 and again from 1983 to 1985. "Today, another industrial revolution is occurring. It is being driven by nanotechnology and its convergence with information technology and biotechnology. Nanotechnology holds tremendous potential—for breakthroughs in medicine, in the production of clean water and energy, and in computers and electronics. It may be the single most important advance of this new century. But with its ability to fundamentally change the properties of matter, nanotechnology also may pose both the greatest challenge and biggest opportunity for EPA in its history. EPA needs to seriously consider the constructive and thoughtful changes that Davies puts forward in his report."

The report *EPA and Nanotechnology: Oversight for the 21st Century* is available on the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies Web site at www.nanotechproject.org. You may also contact the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20004-3027 or call (202) 691-4282.

This Water Is Divine

Looking for a little more from your water? A Stockton, California-based company is now offering bottled water that has been blessed by a member of the clergy.

The product—Holy Drinking Water—strives "to provide people with a daily reminder that they can and should do good in life and that they may not be as bad of a person as they think." However, if you are a sinner or "evil in nature," beware: The label warns that "this product may cause burning, intense heat, sweating, skin irritations, rashes, itchiness, vomiting, bloodshot and watery eyes, pale skin color, and oral irritations."

Join our Drinking Water Listserv

Need the latest information fast?

The National Environmental Services Center currently hosts a listserv that offers the latest drinking water news and products. New information is transmitted to subscribers via e-mail on a regular basis. Our listserv is for notification only and cannot be used to post messages.

For information about the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse's contributions to drinking water in small communities, subscribe to the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse News Listserv at www.nesc.wvu.edu/ndwc/ndwc_listserv.htm



We need your opinion

To improve *On Tap* and other National Environmental Services Center products and services, we would like to hear from our readers. Please take a moment to complete the Online Readership Questionnaire at www.nesc.wvu.edu (look for the purple tab toward the top of the page.) Your comments, suggestions, and article ideas are welcome. We look forward to hearing from you!

RDUS Loans: Poverty Rate Unchanged; Others Up

Interest rates for Rural Development Utilities Service (RDUS) water and wastewater loans have been announced. The market and intermediate rates are up slightly, while the poverty rate is unchanged.

RDUS interest rates are issued quarterly at three different levels: the poverty line rate, the intermediate rate, and the market rate. The rate applied to a particular project depends on community income and the type of project being funded.

To qualify for the poverty line rate, two criteria must be met. First, the loan must primarily be used for facilities required for health and sanitary standards. Second, the median household income of the area being served must be below 80 percent of the state's non-metropolitan median income or fall below the federal poverty level. As of April 1, 2007, the federal poverty level was \$20,650 for a family of four.

To qualify for the intermediate rate, the service area's median household income cannot exceed 100 percent of the state's non-metropolitan median income.

The market rate is applied to projects that don't qualify for either the poverty or intermediate rates. The market rate is based on the average of the Bond Buyer index.

The rates, which apply to all loans issued from July 1 through September 30, 2007, are:

▷ **poverty line: 4.5 percent** (unchanged from the previous quarter);

△ **intermediate: 4.375 percent** (up 0.125 from the previous quarter); and

△ **market: 4.250 percent** (up 0.125 from the previous quarter).

For this quarter, all loans will be obligated at the lower (4.250) rate. RDUS loans are administered through state Rural Development offices, which can provide specific information concerning RDUS loan requirements and applications procedures.

For the phone number of your state Rural Development office, contact the National Environmental Services Center at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191. The list is also available on the Rural Development Web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.

CoBank Funds Rural Water Systems

CoBank, a federally chartered and regulated bank that serves rural utility systems and agricultural cooperatives, provides loans for water and wastewater systems serving communities with fewer than 20,000 residents.

The minimum loan amount for a new customer is typically one million dollars with a term not to exceed 20 years. CoBank also offers a Small Loan Program, which provides loans of \$50,000 to \$500,000 at fixed and variable interest rates. Loans may be used to cover construction-related costs, as interim funding until guaranteed federal assistance is delivered, or to refinance higher interest loans from other sources.

For more information, visit CoBank's Web site at www.cobank.com or call (800) 542-8072.

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