



WHERE'S IT GO?

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I recently returned from National Rural Water's (NRWA) annual WaterPro conference. WaterPro is like our annual conference except it's on a national level. Rural water staff from across the country, as well as elected officials, board members and decision makers gather for several days of training, networking and meeting vendors from all sectors of the water industry. One of the training sessions I attended, Regulatory Policy – An Overview of Policy Issues was facilitated by members of the NRWA Regulatory Committee. The Regulatory Committee reviews proposed regulatory actions and provides comment and feedback based on, among other things, your opinion of the issues. They have been very successful in representing you, the small system owners and operators, in front of Congress on the national stage. After a brief overview of the past years efforts and accomplishments, the Committee opened the session up to the attendees to get feedback on regulatory issues that were important to them.

As you can imagine, protecting our drinking water and customers was the major topic. PFOA/PFOS and lead and copper dominated the conversation. Should the EPA and/or the States develop and impose mcl's for PFOA/PFOS? What is the best approach to deal with the problem? Should corrosion control be mandatory? We need to remove these compounds and carcinogens so we can

provide safe drinking water to the public. Our image and our reputation has taken a huge hit. We need to regain the trust of the public. I agree.

When there was a lull in the conversation, I raised my hand and spoke. "You know, in all the discussion of needing to remove this, sequester that, and whatever, not one mention was made as to where all these things we remove will eventually end up" I said. Can anyone guess where that is? If you said the wastewater treatment plant, you are correct. What we take out up there most likely will end up down here. Are we putting additional strain (and cost) on the wastewater plant to remove phosphorous? Are our facilities even capable of treating and/or removing some of the stuff we are sending them, or does it just pass through? Or worse yet, inhibit the treatment plants ability to efficiently treat normal sewage? There was a brief silence as mouths hung open, heads cocked and the words "I never thought of it that way" began to circulate.

We need to do all we can to provide safe drinking water to the public. We also need to make sure what we remove, and by what method, can be safely and economically treated by our wastewater treatment plants. Otherwise, we are just sending our problems down the river to someone else. Just sayin'. 💧💧