

DATE: January 3, 1997
TO: Division of Water Supply Engineering Staff
FROM: Allen R. Hammer, P.E., Director, Division of Water Supply Engineering
THRU: Eric H. Bartsch, P.E., Director, Office of Water Programs
SUBJECT: Water – Policy – Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs
Delete Working Memo 329

Attached is the policy under which the Division of Water Supply Engineering operates with regard to use of public water supply reservoirs. This policy is the American Waterworks Association policy as revised June 23, 1996.

This policy is for your information in future use.

Attachment

Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs

Adopted by the Board of Directors June 13, 1971, reaffirmed Jan. 28, 1979, and Jan. 25, 1987, and revised June 23, 1996.

AWWA supports the principle that water of highest quality should be used as the source of supply for public water systems. Because each water utility is responsible for its product, determination of type and extent of recreational use of impounding reservoirs should be vested in the water utility.

In making decisions regarding recreational uses of their water supply reservoirs, utilities must give strong consideration to the current level of treatment, the potential for water quality degradation, and additional treatment requirements that may be incurred. Those utilities with minimal treatment should provide the strongest controls on recreational use.

Storage reservoirs from which treated water is supplied directly to the public require the strictest of controls and under no conditions should be used for any form of recreation.

There is a growing demand for use of reservoirs for recreational purposes. Reservoir management practices in the provision of a water supply for domestic use are often not compatible with those for recreational use of reservoirs. It should be recognized that uncontrolled recreational use of domestic water supply reservoirs can result in deteriorated water quality which increases the potential for a waterborne disease to occur and conflicts with management practices needed to control water quality. In addition, the use of chemicals to control nuisance organisms and plants in reservoirs may conflict with recreational activities such as fishing. Considerations such as these should be carefully evaluated prior to allowing recreation on domestic water supply reservoirs.

It should be the vested responsibility of water utilities to determine the use of their reservoirs. Where the utility does not enjoy sole ownership and control, a cooperative effort should be made by all interested parties to develop a reservoir use policy, applying total water management principles, that minimizes the risk of contamination and assures an adequate supply of safe drinking water for the community. The decision concerning recreation and the associated degree of treatment should be made by utilities and based on water quality concerns, on applicable laws and regulations, and on information provided by AWWA, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and other organizations that conduct research and present technical reports. This information should be used to balance and assess public demand for greater utilization of water resources.

The impacts of swimming, boating, fishing, and other recreational activities, including any associated land development for non-point source runoff, should be the subject of rigorous study prior to permitting such activities, and of close monitoring once the activities commence. The public must recognize that recreational use of reservoirs may result in added capital and operating costs which should be borne by the recreational user and may increase the charge for water.