

To Source Water Collaborative member organizations:

I am reaching out to find out if your organization would endorse the idea of a National Source Water Protection Week – in concept only, with no financial or human resource commitment required.

The primary purpose is to raise awareness around source water protection. Given the growing attention on drinking water challenges, we believe it is important to raise the public awareness on the protection of our nation's drinking water supply sources (i.e., source water). It has long been demonstrated that the protection of source water – a preventive element in the multiple barrier approach in safeguarding our drinking water – is a highly cost-effective, resilient, and sustainable approach to produce safe and affordable drinking water.

In January 2021, Jennifer Heymann, a past chair of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) Source Water Protection Committee and currently a trustee of the Water Resource Sustainability Division, introduced the idea of a Source Water Protection Week to me. Jennifer had held an internal event at American Water on source water protection in September 2020 and it was an overwhelming success. People were genuinely excited to learn more about watersheds and aquifers and how they can be good stewards of water and the environment.

As the current president of AWWA and a long time source water protection enthusiast, I believe a Source Water Protection Week is a great idea. I have solicited help from Becky Ohrtman, who has retired from the source water protection program of Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) because she was instrumental in the establishment of Iowa's Source Water Protection Week in 2016 through a proclamation by the Governor of Iowa.

Jennifer, Becky, and I have since then explored various mechanisms and pathways for the establishment of a Source Water Protection Week at the national level. We have met with AWWA Director of Communication and Government Affairs Office staff, selected members of the Source Water Collaborative, and Congressional staff.

We understand that making the Source Water Protection Week a reality will take time and effort and thus we are initiating steps to accomplish this worthy goal. At this point, we would like to confirm your organization's endorsement for the idea of a Source Water Protection Week. We are not requesting financial or in-kind resources from your organization on this effort. We all know that partnership are key to success for source water protection, it is our hope that we can count on your organization's support for this timely national proclamation. As stated by Helen Keller "alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

We believe raising awareness on source water protection is a great idea and is long overdue. Thanks to effort by AWWA and its partners, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is dedicating resources to support source water protection. Furthermore, states, local government, watershed organizations, and water utilities are increasingly being creative in financing source water protection programs in protecting natural infrastructure, implementing green infrastructure, and managing stormwater, just to name a few. We believe it is important to keep the momentum going to increase the profile of source water protection across the country. A Source Water Protection Week would be a basic educational tool to enhance the protection of drinking water.

In summary, we would like to receive your support for a National Source Water Protection Week. Please send your response and/or questions to Chi Ho Sham (chiho.sham@erg.com) by August 16th. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chi Ho Sham, American Water Works Association President / Eastern Research Group, VP & Chief Scientist
Jennifer Heymann, American Water, Sr. Project Manager of Env. & Water Quality
Becky Ohrtman, Iowa Water Quality Consulting, LLC, Principal (retired IDNR Source Water Protection Program)