**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. **What is a public water system (or waterworks)?**

**Answer:**

Water systems are classified according to rules developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and each state. Typically, water systems fall into two broad categories: public and non-public. In Virginia, a public water system (or waterworks) can be further classified into three categories with each described as follows:

* C: Community water system (or waterworks): This serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves 25 year-round residents.
* NTNC: Nontransient noncommunity water system (or waterworks): This is not a community water system (or waterworks), and regularly serves at least 25 of the same persons over six months out of the year.
* NC: Noncommunity water system (waterworks): This is not a community water system (or waterworks), and it regularly serves at least 25 non-residential individuals (transient) during at least 60 days out of the year.

1. **What is a public water system number or PWSID No.?**

**Answer:**

All waterworks are uniquely identified by a water system number called the “PWSID No.”. This number consists of the two character state code for Virginia (i.e., VA) followed by the 7-digit number identifying the particular water system; e.g., the PWSID No. for the City of Richmond waterworks is VA4760100.

1. **How can I use the Drinking Water Watch Application?**

**Answer:**

You can search using one of the following criteria: (i) the PWSID No., (ii) the water system name, (iii) the locality the water system serves, (iv) the type of water system [e.g., community (C), nontransient noncommunity (NTNC), transient noncommunity (NC)], or (v) the primary source water type (e.g., groundwater or surface water). When the user clicks “Search for Water Systems”, a list of all waterworks meeting the search criteria will appear under the Drinking Water Watch. Users can click on each entry to view additional information. The user can then click the links on the side panel to view other ODW data about that specific waterworks.

1. **What information that can be retrieved from the Drinking Water Watch?**

**Answer:**

There are two broad categories of information:

* Public Water Systems (or Waterworks):
* Inventory
* Sampling Schedules
* Violations & Enforcement Actions
* Sampling Data Reported for Public Water Systems
* TCR (Bacteriological)
* Non-TCR (physical, chemical, and radiological)

1. **What are the search parameters that can be used in the Drinking Water Watch?**

**Answer:**

There are six Search Parameters:

* Water System PWSID No. [Best information to conduct a precise search]
* Water System Name
* Principal County Served
* Water System Type
* Primary Source Water Type
* Point of Contact Type

The information that is retrieved depends on the initial search parameter selected and into which the user specifies additional search field criteria to refine the data search. Each of the six search parameters provides a common “Index” which provides further information (or insight) for the user to refine the data search.

1. **What does a user need to begin access to Drinking Water Watch?**

**Answer:**

Any one of the following:

* Water System No. (or PWSID No.); e.g., VA4760100
* Name of the Public Water System; e.g., City of Richmond Waterworks
* Name of the County where the Water System is located; e.g., Fairfax County
* Type of Water System; e.g., C, NTNC, or NC.
* The primary water source; e.g., surface water, groundwater, etc.
* An active point-of-contact; e.g., OP (operator), AC (administrator), etc.

1. **Can I search using a part of a water system’s name or part of a water system’s PWSID number?**

**Answer:**

Yes. However, the search is improved when the complete water system name or water system number is fully known.

1. **Is the entry of the water system name case sensitive?**

**Answer:**

No. As an example, “Mayfield” and “mayfield” will yield the same search outcome.

1. **Can I get the list of all water systems in a given County?**

**Answer:**

Yes. Just select the “County” of interest from the drop down box at “Principal County Served” or from the link to the “County Map of Virginia” at the bottom of the “Drinking Water Watch” opening page.

1. **Can I get a list of all water systems by “Water System Type”?**

**Answer:**

Yes. Just select the type “C=Community”, “NTNC=Nontransient Noncommunity”, or “NC=Noncommunity” of interest from the drop down box at “Water System Type”. You may go to the “Glossary” under “Water System Type” for a further explanation of public water system types.

1. **Can I get a list of all water systems by “Primary Source Water Type”?**

**Answer:**

Yes. Just select the type “Ground Water (GW)”, “Ground Water Purchased (GWP)”, “Ground Water Under Direct Influence of Surface Water (GU)”, “Ground Water Under Direct Influence of Surface Water Purchased (GUP)”, “Surface Water (SW)”, and “Surface Water Purchased (SWP)” of interest from the drop down box at “Source Water Type”. You may go to the “Glossary” under “Source Water Type” for a further explanation of public water primary source water types.

1. **What information is included in a general search that yields a listing of water systems?**

**Answer:**

There are five specific fields that are displayed: (i) Water System No., (ii) Water System Name, (iii) Type, (iv) Status, and (v) Principal City/County Served. The “Water System No.” in each record of the listing provides a hyperlink to detailed Drinking Water Watch information for that specific water system.

1. **Once a water system has been located by its “Water System No.” from a search listing,**

**the “Water Systems Details” page will present a vast array of information on that water system. What comprises this information?**

**Answer:**

* Basic water system information.
* Available contact information.
* Annual operating periods, populations served, and service connections.
* Sources of water.
* Service areas.
* Water purchases.

On the left side of the page with the displayed information are links to further information about the selected water system.

1. **Can I print out or save Drinking Water Watch pages?**

**Answer:**

Yes. Most web browsers allow you to print preview and print from the File menu. Everything you see on the returned Drinking Water Watch (DWW) browser page will be printed, whether it fits on your computer screen or not. Use the File menu also to save a returned DWW browser page.

1. **What types of samples can I search for across multiple systems?**

**Answer:**

Currently you can select Coliform Samples, Coliform Samples (Detection Only), Lead and Copper Summaries, and Summarized Field Sample Results.

1. **How do I limit the collection date range of the samples?**

**Answer:**

The collection date range presents the last 2 years of samples by default. You can limit this by using the date range collection entry boxes.

**17) Do the Systems Search Parameters limit the global sample search across systems?**

**Answer:**

Yes they do. That means you can limit sample selection by any combination of County Served, System Type, and Primary Source Water Type as well as Sample Class and Collection Date Range. You can even limit it by System Name pattern was well if you wish.

**18) Do all drinking water samples have to be tested by a certified laboratory?**

**Answer:**

Yes. All laboratories must be certified to perform drinking water analyses for microbiological, physical, chemical, and radiological contaminants under provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). In Virginia, the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is the primary authority to certify all other laboratories performing drinking water analyses using one or more approved analytical methods. This includes laboratories located out of state that perform testing for public waterworks in Virginia. See also links:

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/drinking-water/information-for-laboratories/>

<https://www.epa.gov/dwlabcert>

**19) What role does the Office of Drinking Water (ODW) play when it comes to inspections and household water?**

**Answer:**

ODW is the regulating authority for all waterworks in Virginia. On a regular basis, ODW performs inspections or sanitary surveys of waterworks facilities to help ensure that the water quality is safe as delivered to the consumer at the meter or point of entry. Residential and commercial inspections are not included in the ODW’s role.

**20) How can I find out more about my water service provider?**

**Answer:**

Starting with the Drinking Water Watch search screen, you must find your water service provider or waterworks by searching on the water system name, water system number or principal county served. After you have selected your waterworks, you will see information, including type, population, points of contact, sources of water, and service areas. Select the type of information you wish to view from the hyperlinks in the left panel.