

DRINKING WATER



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South Carolina

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

for Technical, Managerial & Financial
Sustainability of Public Water Systems

Annual Implementation Report

Fiscal Year 2026



SC DEPARTMENT of
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**



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**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

Wayne J. Shealy, PE
Bureau of Water
2600 Bull St
Columbia, SC 29201

September 29, 2026

Mr. Evan Cooper (cooper.evan@epa.gov – *sent by email only*)
Drinking Water Section
EPA Region 4 – Atlanta
61 Forsyth Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: Fiscal Year 2026 Implementation Report
For the South Carolina Capacity Development Strategy

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Please find enclosed the State Fiscal Year 2026 Implementation Report for the South Carolina Capacity Development Strategy for new and existing public water systems. This report has been prepared by the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (formerly SC Department of Health and Environmental Control). The report will be posted to our Capacity Development webpage at <https://des.sc.gov/capdev> on Wednesday, September 30.

Please contact me at (803) 898-4302 or wayne.shealy@des.sc.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wayne J. Shealy".

Wayne J. Shealy, P.E.
Division Director
State Revolving Fund

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I. Introduction

The 1996 amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) introduced regulations calling for each state to develop a long-term capacity development program to encourage new methods for guiding water systems to reach sustainability while complying with federal and state drinking water regulations. This capacity development authority empowered each state with new flexible regulatory and administrative authorities, including an extensive enforcement ability to lead unsustainable water systems into regulatory compliance.

Prior to implementing this new Capacity Development Program, South Carolina lacked the legal authority to require all new community water systems (CWS) and non-transient non-community water systems (NTNCWS) to have a state-issued operating permit and to achieve and maintain the technical, managerial, and financial capacities necessary to consistently comply with federal and state drinking water regulations. Each water system must meet the capacity requirements established by the State before an operating permit can be issued. The SDWA amendments require each state to hire and retain experienced staff who can technically assist regulated water systems to achieve optimum technical, managerial, and financial capacities while becoming and remaining sustainable for future generations of customers.

On September 1, 1998, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) submitted the new Capacity Development Authority credentials for South Carolina to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 office to prove that the State and SCDHEC had adequate legislative authority and necessary personnel resources to lead regulated water systems into compliance utilizing the capacity development requirements first introduced by the 1996 SDWA amendments.

The EPA, on May 26, 1999, concurred that South Carolina does have the legal authority for sustaining this new program, issuing the first capacity development authority program approval to South Carolina.

On July 1, 2024, Act 60 of S.C. law took effect, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) was split into two agencies: the Department of Public Health (SCDPH) and the Department of Environmental Services (SCDES). Upon the agency split, the designation as the agency responsible as the Capacity Development Authority for South Carolina was transferred to SCDES.

The *Capacity Development Strategy for Existing Public Water Systems* is available at des.sc.gov/capdev.

This State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 report provides updates on current activities and the continued implementation of the SCDES Capacity Development Program, including methods by which the program promotes the sustainability of existing and newly permitted public systems. The primary goal of the Capacity Development Program is for the State to support these regulated public systems as they strive to meet and maintain compliance with federal and state regulatory standards.

II. Capacity Development Program for New Systems

A. Legal Authority

There have been no statutory changes to the requirements for the South Carolina Capacity Development Authority since receiving EPA approval on May 26, 1999. The responsibilities of the Authority were transferred from SCDHEC to SCDES on July 1, 2024.

B. Control Points

The control points for the program, also approved by the EPA on May 26, 1999, continue to be effective today in helping public water systems (PWSs) achieve and remain in compliance with all appropriate drinking water regulations (SDWA and SC State Primary Drinking Water Regulations, R.61-58).

C. Implementation

Since July 1, 1997, each applicant for a construction permit to construct a proposed drinking water system must satisfy strict technical review standards. These include a detailed technical analysis and a feasibility determination to assess if issuing a construction permit is the correct permitting decision for SCDES. If the construction permit is denied, an applicant must connect to a nearby willing and viable PWS to obtain access to potable water.

Between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 2026, the agency has received 56 community water system (CWS) and 49 non-transient non-community water system (NTNC) applications for permitting. Capacity development review standards applied to each of these applicants. Of those applications, 29 CWS applicants and 32 NTNC applicants have received operating approvals.

The permitting process begins when an applicant submits a [Construction Permit Application Water/Wastewater Facilities \(DES 1970\)](#) to SCDES – requesting permission to install a new system to be comprised of a well and distribution system, or a new system comprised of a distribution system master metered from a regional or municipal system, or a new system using a surface water body as a water source.

Since July 1, 1997, applicants have submitted 105 Construction Permit Applications requesting permission to construct a new CWS or NTNC system. A summary of the outcomes for these applications is shown in Table 1.

Permitting Activities	CWS	NTNCWS	Totals
Number of Applications Received (07/01/97 - 06/30/26)	56	49	105
Number of Applications Pending Construction Permit Decision	0	0	0
Number of Construction Permit Applications Denied	0	0	0
Number of Construction Permit Applications Dead Filed	20	9	29
Number of Construction Permits Issued	38	40	78
Number of Operating Approvals	29	32	61

Table 1. Construction Permit Application Outcomes in South Carolina, July 1, 1997 – June 30, 2026.

SCDES (and previously SCDHEC) has not formally denied any application for a construction permit since the capacity development procedures took effect; however, several of the proposed projects have been ‘dead-filed’ (abandoned before construction) or the owner simply withdrew the application after realizing the project lacked the technical characteristics to support the issuance of a construction permit.

An open application is considered ‘dead-filed’ if six (6) months have elapsed without the applicant responding to unanswered technical, managerial, or financial capacity inquiries. Most applicants who have withdrawn an application did so after it became evident that connecting to an existing public system is a more feasible option than constructing a new system. [Attachment I](#) summarizes the permitting decision for each new system application processed through SFY 2026.

D. Performance Measures

1. Minimizing the Proliferation of Small Water Systems

The most significant goal and outcome of the SCDES capacity development strategy is to eliminate the proliferation of small, non-viable public water systems. Each water system application noted in Table 1 is or would have been a small system, as the service population for each would have been less than 10,000 people. To date, 78 out of the 105 applicants have received construction permits. Prior to capacity development and new system permitting requirements taking effect, most of those projects would have been permitted, subsequently adding to the proliferation of small water systems incapable of achieving long-term sustainability.

2. Compliance

EPA instituted the Enforcement Targeting Tool (ETT) program to replace the SNC (significant non-compliance) list for monitoring and reporting PWSs with regulatory compliance issues. ETT is part of the EPA Enforcement Response Policy that went into effect in 2013. [Attachment II](#) provides compliance status information of systems in [Attachment I](#) that received operating permits within the last five (5) years and their ETT

/ Enforcement outcomes. Of note, the current ETT policy disqualifies any water system with an ETT score of 11 or higher from receiving Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) funding for an otherwise eligible construction project, except in cases where the construction project will return the system to regulatory compliance.

III. Capacity Development Program for Existing Systems

The capacity development strategy encompasses several long-standing SCDES (and formerly SCDHEC) activities that have been effective for over 30 years, such as water quality monitoring, construction permitting, and the sanitary survey program, as well as other initiatives including the operating permit program and the Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP). These activities work in concert to improve public health and the overall sustainability and resiliency of regulated water systems.

A. Water Quality Monitoring and Annual Fee Program

The annual water quality monitoring fee paid by each PWS is calculated by a formula based upon the number of sources used by the system (groundwater and/or surface water) and the total number of active taps in use by the system. This monitoring fee program provides financial support for activities in the SCDES Bureau of Water; notably distribution system monitoring, training for PWS operators on regulatory compliance, in-house reviews of plans and specifications submitted by applicants for water system construction projects, and the distribution system optimization program discussed below.

The State operates a water quality monitoring program that originated in the 1960s, developed with the purpose of achieving statewide compliance with federally stipulated chemical and radionuclide monitoring procedures and water quality standards. This monitoring was funded by state appropriations until 1993, when new fee legislation was enacted to address increasing monitoring costs and to satisfy more stringent federal source water monitoring requirements that were on the horizon. Recognizing that many smaller systems simply could not afford the new laboratory costs without some subsidization, the 1993 fee schedules began cost sharing some of the expenses for small systems via incorporating them into the calculation of fees for larger systems.

This 1993 fee legislation has proven to be beneficial and an important health benefit by ensuring residents of the state have access to drinking water that is routinely monitored and meets federal and state standards. Increasing costs to monitor and the growing list of potential contaminants in water to be monitored caused the state legislature to enact a fee increase in 2003. This was followed by another fee increase in 2013, which allowed the State to continue to maintain drinking water systems compliance with federal and state monitoring regulations. In calendar year 2025, compliance with chemical and radionuclide monitoring requirements was 95% for all South Carolina PWSs.

The SCDES Distribution System Optimization Program emphasizes the importance of having an optimum disinfection residual in a distribution system while minimizing disinfection byproducts within that distribution system. Optimization is improved by choosing the best

monitoring sites, using quality monitoring practices, and utilizing systematic water quality data management and evaluation techniques. For example, a distribution system operator can sample hydrants to provide a more accurate water assessment and implement effective operational changes, such as reducing storage tank turnover time, increasing storage tank mixing, or flushing the distribution system. Management activities like these improve water quality in a distribution system where slower turnover areas exist that can become roadblocks to optimization.

In SFY 2026, 1,386 federally defined systems and 964 state systems were billed SWDA fees totaling \$5,046,448. A significant percentage of these fees are paid in scheduled quarterly payments throughout the year. SCDES has collected 85% of the total billed amount thus far. A software upgrade resulted in billing delays during SFY 2026, which accounts for the decrease in the amount of payments received compared to previous years.

B. Construction Permitting Program

The Construction Permitting Program is the first step in ensuring all new water system construction complies with the appropriate technical specifications and regulations in South Carolina. To accomplish this, all project plans and specifications submitted by a PWS for a new construction project must follow established review guidelines. This program also ensures that the managerial and financial capacity of any newly proposed PWS is sufficient before a construction permit is issued.

Prior to the passing of the 1996 SDWA amendments, the Construction Permitting Program focused only on the technical aspects of a new project. These amendments resulted in updated permitting procedures to facilitate satisfactory managerial and financial capacities via the technical aspects of the project. Those permitting updates require new feasibility and viability standards to be in place before a construction permit can be issued to the applicant. Equally important, SCDES could also deny any application for a new system construction permit if connecting to a viable, existing, and willing PWS is more feasible. The objective of capacity development is to prevent the creation of a new system that will struggle to be sustainable in the future, thereby increasing the proliferation of non-viable water systems in the state. To promote this objective, SCDES obtains assurances from each applicant during the initial permitting process that technical, managerial, and financial capacities are ample enough for the system to remain compliant with regulations into the future.

Construction permit application fees are due from each applicant when the application is submitted. This review fee is a component of fee regulations that has been approved by the state legislature. The current fee schedule was first approved in SFY 2004 and is in the State Environmental Protection Fee Regulation (R.61-30). This fee also is noted on page 2 of the instructions to the [*Construction Permit Application Water/Wastewater Facilities \(DES 1970\)*](#).

C. Sanitary Survey Program

The Sanitary Survey Program remains a crucial feature in the SCDES water system supervision program, as it completes detailed on-site inspections of each water system within established intervals and follows up to correct any exceptions found. The sanitary survey is also used to notify drinking water program staff if a system may cause a direct and negative effect upon public health if not operating in compliance with the necessary regulations.

Public water system classifications are based on the number of taps (customers served) and type or types of water source(s) for the system. This classification also guides how often sanitary surveys are completed. Community and non-transient non-community systems serve the most people and have a goal of being surveyed annually and every two years, respectively. Transient systems are surveyed on three-year intervals.

The sanitary survey format in use by SCDES staff has 39 required technical questions to inquire about and answer; significant questions are denoted by an asterisk (*) on the form due to their risk of causing public health issues. A system rated as unsatisfactory will be referred to the Drinking Water & Recreational Waters Enforcement Section within SCDES to quickly correct any deficiency.

The types of significant deficiencies vary and include: a lack of protection from contamination at the source, treatment and chemical feed problems, water quality issues in the distribution system, lack of protection from contamination in storage facilities, lack of reliable capacity information for pumping equipment and controls, inadequate monitoring or record keeping, and uncorrected deficiencies from an earlier survey. In addition to filing a notice of violation, consent orders or fines against a system are enforcement activities that are used to compel that system to return to compliance. On-site technical assistance from SCDES Drinking Water & Recreational Waters Protection staff, the Office of Rural Water, or a SCDES technical assistance contractor may be used to help return a system to regulatory compliance.

Table 2 reports the sanitary survey results over the past five state fiscal years (SFY 2022 through SFY 2026) for all federal water systems operating in South Carolina.

Sanitary Survey Results – Federal Systems				
<u>State Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Number of Systems</u>	<u>Number of Sanitary Surveys</u>	<u>Number Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Percentage Unsatisfactory</u>
2026	1386	594	29	4.8
2025	1402	646	14	2.2
2024	1408	540	8	1.5
2023	1391	846	9	1.1
2022	1396	686	26	3.8

Table 2. Sanitary Survey Results for Federal Systems in South Carolina for State Fiscal Years 2022 – 2026.

D. Business Plans

The 1998 revisions to the State Primary Drinking Water Regulations (R.61-58) gave the State additional enforcement authority to require any PWS, after receiving an unsatisfactory sanitary survey rating, to prepare and submit an approvable business plan. The business plan provision of a system operating permit allows six months for plan submission. The Department decided a faster solution was needed to protect public health and address compliance issues. In some cases, by not requiring the preparation of a business plan, the expense of hiring a consultant to prepare a business plan is avoided and system resources can be used to focus on resolving compliance issues and protecting public health. SCDES can often provide technical assistance to the affected system, too, expediting the resolution of compliance issues.

SCDES, however, will require a written business plan to be submitted if needed. A written business plan may be required if ownership of a PWS is transferred to an entity not currently in the utility business in South Carolina, when a new community water system is being permitted, or in cases where technical assistance did not correct the compliance issue for the system.

E. Operating Permit Program

The SCDES Operating Permit Program became effective with the 1998 amendments to the State Primary Drinking Water Regulations (R.61-58). This authorized the Department to consider operating permits to be legally enforceable documents in support of agency efforts to improve the sustainability of existing PWSs and ensures the sustainability of any new water systems permitted for construction. Operating permits also have special conditions that are useful in preventing existing water systems from falling out of compliance or into a non-sustainable condition. Each operating permit contains a special condition to prevent an existing system from being transferred to a new entity/owner that SCDES finds to lack the technical, managerial, and financial capacities required to operate the system in compliance with federal and state regulations. An operating permit will be transferred to a new owner

requesting the transfer only if that new owner receives SCDES approval before taking ownership of the system.

All operating permits are printed in a standard format, but each one has its own system-specific information. System changes or alterations need to be reflected in a modification to the existing operating permit. Prior to an operating permit being issued, SCDES will evaluate the technical capacities, including water source(s), storage facilities and treatment systems of the overall water system, as applicable. If the existing conditions of the system are less than the capacities required for it to provide safe and reliable water to its customers, the operating permit will stipulate a special condition where the owner must upgrade the system as required to satisfy current regulations. Any required upgrades must be completed within a specific timeframe to prevent an enforcement action for resolution.

There are 1,386 federally defined systems in South Carolina and approximately 85 percent have received operating permits. The majority of the active federally defined water systems that do not have operating permits are transient non-community systems. Several operating permits have been reissued due to name and/or ownership changes.

F. Encourage and Facilitate the Consolidation or Regionalization of Public Water Systems

A goal of the capacity development strategy is to encourage and facilitate the consolidation and regionalization of PWSs, where appropriate. South Carolina has no regulations to require consolidation or regionalization, therefore there can be limited benefits for a viable system to take on the issues of a non-viable system. This can be compounded when the community served by a non-viable system fears losing its identity by being merged into another system.

The State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program has a few incentives to encourage a viable system to take ownership of a non-viable system, including an interest rate reduction of 0.50% below the standard SRF interest rate to finance construction costs, or in some cases, principal forgiveness funding for some or all construction costs needed to upgrade the infrastructure of a non-viable system to support a takeover by a viable system. Additionally, the SRF Program has active contacts with other funding agencies to help secure grants and/or loans with favorable repayment terms for a consolidation or regionalization project. The SRF Program can also offer financial and technical assistance to municipalities and communities needing to develop a business plan to enhance the sustainability of those drinking water systems.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) have provided a significant increase in the amount of funding available to PWSs to implement critical projects and enhance sustainability. The SC SRF Program within SCDES administers the funds made available by IIJA in conjunction with the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA). ARPA funds are administered by RIA, with technical assistance from SCDES. Projects that support regionalization by systems through takeovers, consolidations, or

partnerships are high-priority projects for IJA and ARPA funding in the state. The following are examples of drinking water projects that utilized these funds for the consolidation or regionalization of resources:

- Interconnection between the Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission and the Town of Batesburg-Leesville to address emerging contaminants, decommission the town water plant, and resolve other system issues;
- Improvements to facilitate the consolidation of the Bull Swamp Water Company and Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities;
- Consolidation of four water systems owned by the Town of Summerton into a single system and increased storage capacity to alleviate reliability issues previously experienced by each of the four systems;
- Interconnection between the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency and the Provident community to address poor quality groundwater;
- Construction of a water line between the City of Abbeville and the Donalds-Due West Water and Sewer Authority as the first regional effort of the Abbeville County Water Commission;
- Improvements to increase capacity of a recently acquired small rural water company by the Gaffney Board of Public Works;
- Interconnection between the Town of Olanta and the Barrineau Public Utilities to improve reliability;
- Extension of the Clarendon County water system to two separate water utilities and Camp Bob Cooper; and
- Implementation of regional improvements to facilitate consolidation of the Town of Pelzer into the Greenville Water System.

The largest consolidation facilitated by SCDES continues to be the five municipal water systems in Hampton County that merged to form the Lowcountry Regional Water System in 2013. DWSRF provided funding and technical assistance during the study phases to plan for the merging of these systems. This consolidation took several years to complete. The DWSRF continues to provide financial support for this consolidation through projects funded by principal forgiveness loans. Today, each system is collectively stronger than when they were independently owned and operated. Each of these systems is experiencing improved sustainability for the long term. Three additional municipal systems operate in Hampton County that opted not to join the consolidated system.

G. Local Planning and Coordination between State and Local Governments

The SRF Program continues to be an active participant with the roundtable of funders that regularly meets to discuss applications received for funding upcoming water infrastructure projects. This group represents all areas of the state and is comprised of representatives of SCDES, SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, US Economic Development Administration, USDA Rural Development, and Community Development Block Grant program within the SC Department of Commerce. The group directs applicants for infrastructure funding to the agency best suited for each project. Funding agencies in the group also work together to co-fund projects with loans, grants, principal forgiveness loans, or a combination of those funding tools.

H. Continuing Initiatives and New Initiatives

1. Area Wide Optimization Program

The SCDES Drinking Water & Recreational Waters Protection Division continues to participate in the EPA Region 4 Multi-State Area-Wide Optimization Program (AWOP), recognizing the value of this program and the contributions it makes toward ensuring the citizens of South Carolina have drinking water that meets regulatory standards. The goal of the program is to maximize public health protection by optimizing surface water treatment plant performance. By optimizing turbidity removal at a surface water treatment plant, disinfection byproducts and microbial levels can be reduced in the water system distribution system. SCDES has developed scoring systems to evaluate system optimization for disinfection byproducts and microbial protection. In calendar year 2025, approximately 70% of the population being served by surface water treatment plants received water optimized for microbial protection, and approximately 63% received water optimized for disinfection byproducts.

The DWSRF set-aside for public water system supervision (PWSS) provides most of the funding for the AWOP Program. AWOP produces an annual report to detail how the program assists water systems with meeting optimization goals. A copy of the calendar year 2025 AWOP report can be found in [Attachment III](#).

During an annual sanitary survey, the optimization results and successes for a surface water treatment plant are reviewed and discussed with the management of each system. Information communicated in the sanitary survey report includes details on the optimization results and treatment plant performance. Systems that have not joined the optimization program are reminded during their sanitary surveys of the positive outcomes that AWOP can achieve.

The AWOP Program is flexible and adaptable for setting goals in other areas of drinking water like lead and copper corrosion control, emerging contaminants, and operation and maintenance techniques and procedures. The procedures, critical thinking, and other analytical skills developed through AWOP are crucial for assisting water utilities in their ongoing efforts to develop lead service line inventories and activities related to schools and childcare facilities.

2. Outside Technical Assistance

The South Carolina Rural Water Association (SCRWA) provides much-needed technical assistance to small water systems (those serving less than 10,000) in SC. A contract for these services is funded through a DWSRF technical assistance set-aside. SCRWA staff provide technical assistance services and training opportunities for small water systems statewide. They also work with small systems who have applied for DWSRF funding that need to improve their sustainability score to satisfy DWSRF eligibility requirements. This work is often one-on-one and on-site with the system. SCRWA frequently consults and collaborates with SCDES Drinking Water & Recreational Waters Protection Division staff.

SCRWA educates systems about water loss control, provides regulatory compliance assistance, system operational assistance, mapping assistance, and asset management training. They also provide training opportunities on system operation, regulatory compliance, and sustainability topics. SCDES is pleased with the outcomes being derived from the SCRWA contract and will continue the technical assistance contractual relationship with SCRWA in SFY 2027. The TA activities performed by the SCRWA in SFY 2026 are summarized in the report prepared by the SCRWA and included as [Attachment IV](#).

3. Operator Certification Program

SCDES continues to work with the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to have an Operator Certification (OpCert) Program that is up to date with current federal and state drinking water regulations and that can meet the requirements and needs of drinking water systems in the state. SCDES submits an annual report to EPA that describes the state of the OpCert Program in South Carolina. The SC Operator Program report to EPA dated April 2026 is included as [Attachment V](#).

4. 7th Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment

SCDES participated in the 7th Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment (DWINSA) using a capable contractor to collect the information from the water systems and to report findings to the survey. The DWINSA represents the infrastructure needs for drinking water systems over the next 20 years. The 7th DWINSA weighed heavily on the new Lead & Copper Replacement Rule, which will be a major emphasis over the next decade. The results of the 7th DWINSA for SC determined that the total drinking water infrastructure needs for the state for the upcoming 20-year period would total \$8,099,400,000, an increase of \$1,972,000,000 since the previous DWINSA. Despite this demonstration of the increased level of need, the findings of the 7th DWINSA resulted in a decrease to the South Carolina SRF capitalization grant allotment percentage from 1.30% to 1.25%. The DWSRF capitalization grant has been further reduced due to Congressionally Directed Spending (also known as Community Project Funding), which pulls funding from the national SRF allotment to fund specific projects selected by members of Congress. SCDES will be collecting data for the 8th DWINSA during SFY 2027.

5. Office of Rural Water in SCDES

The Office of Rural Water (ORW) was established in May of 2016 and continues to seek innovative solutions and collaborative partnerships to resolve or at least improve long-standing drinking water issues facing small rural water systems. The Office is non-regulatory in nature but does assist systems involved with the enforcement process. These projects can originate with referrals from SCDES management, SCDES Regional Offices, or the Drinking Water & Recreational Waters Enforcement Section. The Office has partnered with numerous organizations in their efforts to assist small rural systems; including the SC SRF Program, SC Rural Water Association, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, USDA-Rural Development, Water Well Trust Organization, US Economic Development Administration, and the Community Development Block Grant Program.

During SFY 2026, the ORW continued to provide technical, managerial and/or financial assistance to help PWSs resolve compliance issues and worked with communities and PWSs to address sustainability issues. Additionally, ORW administered the Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program Drinking Water Grant established by the federal WIIN Act within the state, through a contract with Alliance Labs.

System Monitoring, Operation, and Optimization (SMOO) Project

The SMOO project, a collaboration between the SCDES ORW and public water systems, is working to provide an AI-driven decision support tool to public water systems to identify trends, optimize operations, and address specific water quality issues. The goal of the project is to implement the Community Tier version of Aquaspec at each participating public water system. This AI platform is tailored for use at utilities without requiring Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) integration. Aquaspec utilizes historical reports as training and relies on manual form entry by water system staff for daily compliance tracking and operational recordkeeping. Current funding for the SMOO project is provided by a \$100,000 set-aside from the FFY 2025 DWSRF General Supplemental Capitalization Grant and will support a one-year deployment of Aquaspec, as well as training and technical support, for each of the participating public water systems.

The AI platform will look to improve system management and enhance operational optimization of the participating water systems, resulting in improved access to safe drinking water, reduced drinking water compliance violations, and more efficient operations through reductions in chemical usage for treatment processes and water losses. Progress through the end of SFY 2026 saw the final selection of SMOO project participants across the state:

- Belton-Honea Path (SC0410011) in Anderson County;
- Cassatt Water (SC2820005) in Kershaw County;
- Elloree Water System (SC3810003) in Orangeburg County;

- Georgetown County Water & Sewer District – Waccamaw Neck (SC2220010) in Georgetown County;
- New Ellenton (SC0210007) in Aiken County; and
- Town of Hemingway (SC4510004) in Williamsburg County.

The SMOO project looks to begin the implementation of Aquaspec at the selected water systems during SFY 2027. Successful implementation is anticipated to lead to continued usage by the participating water systems and become a driver for deployment at additional public water systems in the state.

6. Water and Sewer Viability Study

The SC Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA), the SCDES partner agency in implementing the SC SRF Program, conducted a detailed study of water and wastewater utility viability issues in SC. The results and recommendations of the study are published in the South Carolina Water Utility Assessment & Viability Strategy (February 2022), which can be found at the RIA website: ria.sc.gov/utility-viability/.

As recommended in the South Carolina Water Utility Assessment & Viability Strategy, the SC Viability Assistance Network (SC VAN) was established in 2024. The SC VAN is comprised of government agencies and non-profit organizations that provide technical assistance (TA) to drinking water and wastewater utilities. RIA coordinates meetings and administers the SC VAN. The SC VAN currently is comprised of eight member organizations, including the SCDES Office of Rural Water.

The SC VAN serves as an informal group that meets on a regular basis to facilitate the exchange of ideas and coordinate access to TA and other services needed by utilities to attain or maintain viability. In SFY 2026, four SC VAN meetings were held. The SC VAN maintains a Technical Assistance Resources Summary Sheet that can be found on the RIA website at: ria.sc.gov/utility-viability/technical-assistance/. The summary sheet lists TA services provided by member organizations along with eligibility requirements and contact information. The SC VAN has identified multiple TA topics and activities to consider and address. The main topics discussed and considered for future action by the VAN to date include: 1) the need for high-quality and widely available board training, especially for small public drinking water and wastewater utilities, and 2) identifying possible gaps in the types and availability of technical assistance in the state. To address the first item, RIA contracted with a consulting firm to develop a training manual for utility boards. This utility board training manual is nearing completion. A guide for instructors and presentation materials for use by technical assistance providers will accompany the manual. Upon completion, all materials will be published on the RIA website and be available for free to board members, trainers, and other stakeholders.

The South Carolina Water Utility Assessment & Viability Strategy also concluded that it is important for public drinking water and wastewater utilities to have a common and easy to use tool to assess their financial, managerial, and technical capacities and identify

areas for improvement to enhance their viability. Concurrent with the preparation of the Strategy, RIA and their contractor developed the SC Water Utility Viability Tool, which can be download from the RIA website at: ria.sc.gov/utility-viability. The tool has been in use since 2022. The tool allows utilities to conduct a self-assessment of their viability status and generates an overall viability score. The tool results can be shared with organizations such as funding agencies and regulatory agencies. A major update (version 2.1) was developed during SFY 2025 and released in July 2025. The new version enhances ease of use and provides more meaningful results and output. Completion of this tool is now required for all applicants for RIA water and wastewater grants as of SFY 2026.

A pilot Viability Improvement Program was launched by RIA during SFY 2026. This new offering is a unique combination of tailored technical assistance and capital improvement funding for public water and sewer utilities that have experienced viability challenges and are committed to building a stronger future. Participants move through three steps, beginning with a rapid assessment of technical, managerial, and financial needs. More in-depth planning studies are then conducted to develop a full plan of action. Finally, grant funding is provided to implement the highest priority capital improvements. To remain in the program, participants must show continuing progress toward implementing the actions recommended at each step. Three communities have been selected to participate in the program to date.

RIA also offers planning grants to fund studies needed to improve long-term system viability. In SFY 2026, the program was narrowed to focus specifically on facilitating the implementation of regional partnerships that will provide more efficient and effective utility services.

IV. Program Review and Modifications to the Existing Strategy

The SCDES Capacity Development Strategy has been in effect since approval in 1999 and continues to serve both SCDES and the residents of the state whose health it seeks to protect. It is a roadmap for addressing compliance deficiencies that will improve the technical, managerial, and financial capacities of PWSs in South Carolina, ultimately increasing overall sustainability. The strategy contains flexibility that allows for changes in the SCDES Drinking Water Program to improve its effectiveness without requiring many revisions to the written strategy. Experience has shown that improved management capacity is the key to increasing the technical and financial capacities of water systems, with the most noteworthy improvements to management capacity coming via better training and technical assistance. The EPA offers a wide range of capacity development resources; most are free and available for use by any PWS wanting to improve its technical, managerial, and financial capacities. SCDES staff and its technical assistance contractor are always available to help systems and regularly refer systems to the EPA website for information about drinking water regulations, asset management, distribution systems, energy efficiency, rate setting, operational management and training, funding sources and security information.

Pursuant to the America's Water Infrastructure Act Section 2012, an appendix has been added to the Capacity Development Strategy describing how SCDES will assist and encourage PWSs with developing asset management plans that include best practices for asset management. This appendix also describes how SCDES will train and assist water system personnel about asset management practices and strategies.

DWSRF capitalization grants have funded a technical assistance contractor to conduct asset management training workshops for small public drinking water systems (population served of less than 10,000) in the state. Asset management training workshops will continue to emphasize the benefits of asset management planning and having an asset management plan. The training curriculum includes all aspects of asset management planning and tools that systems can use to assist them with preparing an asset management plan. The training incorporates the best practices of asset management including the five core elements that EPA recommends a system consider when preparing an asset management plan: Current State of Assets, Level of Service, Critical Assets, Minimum Life Cycle Costs, and Long-term Funding Plans. In addition, direct assistance has been provided to small systems as well as DWSRF principal forgiveness loan opportunities.

ATTACHMENT I
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for
Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

	System Name / Owner	System Type	Application Date	Decision Pending Approval to Place In Operation [Yes/No] ⁽¹⁾	Date Const. Permit Denied	Date Application Dead Filed	Date Const. Permit Issued ⁽¹⁾	Approval to Place System into Operation Issued
1	Cliffs at Keowee Falls Keowee Investment Group, LLC Oconee County, SC	CWS	11/30/1998	No			01/06/1999	Connected to Town of Salem #3710001 05/23/2003
2	Santee Cooper - John S. Rainey Generating Station Santee Cooper Anderson County, SC	NTNC	03/14/2000	No			08/10/2000	03/19/2001
3	Running Bear Lane Subdivision Rock Smith, Developer Pickens County, SC	CWS	01/24/2000	No		10/15/2000		
4	Sandridge Water System Williamsburg Water & Sewer Authority Williamsburg County, SC	CWS	07/20/2000	No			09/25/2000	08/07/2001
5	Outback On Keowee Now High Meadows POA Pickens County, SC	CWS	02/08/2000	No			10/19/2000	11/20/2003
6	Lakeview Ridge Landrush Trading Co. Lexington, SC	CWS	05/29/1998	No		3/2/2000		

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

	System Name / Owner	System Type	Application Date	Decision Pending Approval to Place In Operation [Yes/No] ⁽¹⁾	Date Const. Permit Denied	Date Application Dead Filed	Date Const. Permit Issued ⁽¹⁾	Approval to Place System into Operation Issued
7	Town of Batesburg-Leesville Town of Batesburg-Leesville Lexington County, SC	CWS	08/25/1999	No			12/15/1999	12/18/2000
8	All God's Children Day Care Ctr. John A. Grant Richland County, SC	NTNC	10/21/1997	No			11/18/1997	08/04/1998
9	Barrett's Island Subdivision Barrett Boulware Beaufort County, SC	CWS	08/26/1998	No		10/13/2000		
10	Legare Island Subdivision Tony Porter Beaufort County, SC	CWS	08/26/1998	No		10/13/2000		
11	Murdaugh Island Subdivision Alex Murdaugh Beaufort County, SC	CWS	08/26/1998	No		10/13/2000		
12	Woodland High School Dorchester County Public Works Dorchester County	NTNC	10/22/1998	No			07/15/1999	08/16/1999
13	New & Living Way Apostolic Church New & Living Way Apostolic Church Edgefield County, SC	NTNC	04/12/1999	No		06/18/2001		

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

	System Name / Owner	System Type	Application Date	Decision Pending Approval to Place In Operation [Yes/No] ⁽¹⁾	Date Const. Permit Denied	Date Application Dead Filed	Date Const. Permit Issued ⁽¹⁾	Approval to Place System into Operation Issued
14	Generation Alternative Group Home Generation Alternative Program, Inc. Greenville County, SC	NTNC	05/27/1998	No			08/17/1998	10/12/1998
15	USSC/The Estates at Hilton Utilities Services of SC, Inc. Lexington County, SC	CWS	10/07/1997	No			11/10/1998	12/07/1999
16	Wilderness Youth Camp Aspen Health Services Oconee County, SC	NTNC	09/02/1997	No			10/08/1997	08/18/2000
17	FINNCHEM FINNCHEM USA Richland County, SC	NTNC	04/01/1998	No			11/23/1998	02/19/1999
18	The KIVA Apartments Nehemiah Corporation Richland County, SC	CWS (Now State)	07/23/1997	No			03/17/1998	05/05/1998
19	The Traces Sierra Properties Spartanburg County, SC	CWS	08/04/1999	No		11/8/2001		
20	Living Word Christian School Living Word Ministries Williamsburg County, SC	NTNC	09/28/1998	No			08/22/2000	11/21/2000

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

	System Name / Owner	System Type	Application Date	Decision Pending Approval to Place In Operation [Yes/No] ⁽¹⁾	Date Const. Permit Denied	Date Application Dead Filed	Date Const. Permit Issued ⁽¹⁾	Approval to Place System into Operation Issued
21	Rootie Branch Saloon David Boone Marlboro County, SC	NTNC	04/30/1998	No		07/22/2000		
22	McDonald Amusements J.G. Environmental Marlboro County, SC	NTNC	09/02/1998	No			11/20/1998	11/23/1998
23	Castle Casino Coastal Real Estate of SC, LLC Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	04/16/1999	No		05/18/2001		
24	Commercial Property-Kanos Fred Kanos Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	04/08/1999	No		05/18/2001		
25	Lady Luck Tom Wicker Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	05/25/1999	No		07/15/2001		
26	Las Grover Coastal Real Estate of SC, LLC Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	07/12/1999	No		08/09/2001		
27	R. Clay Sparrow R. Clay Sparrow Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	05/04/1999	No		06/09/2001		

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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28	Robert Huckabee Robert Huckabee Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	05/25/1999	No		07/22/2001		
29	Liberty Water Line Pickens County Water Authority Pickens County, SC	CWS	10/09/1997	No			12/12/1997	04/05/2000
30	Reserve at Lake Keowee Keowee River Club, LLC Pickens County, SC	CWS	02/16/2000	No		02/05/2001		
31	Cliffs at Keowee Vineyards Keowee Investment Group, LLC Pickens County, SC	CWS	08/26/1997	No			10/10/1997	10/01/2001
32	Brightwater Bay Phase II Burdett & Harvin Properties, LLC Greenwood County, SC	CWS	05/17/2000	No		04/11/2002		
33	Eastern Sumter Co./Shiloh Water Sys. Sumter Co. Utilities Commission Sumter County, SC	CWS	03/13/2002	No			04/10/2002	Partial 12/01/2003
34	Town of Awendaw Town of Awendaw Charleston County, SC	CWS	11/08/2000	No			06/18/2004	08/17/2009

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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35	Nesmith Indiantown Morrisville W/S Williamsburg Co. Water & Sewer Authority Williamsburg County, SC	CWS	12/08/2000	No			04/21/2004	06/21/2004
36	South Williamsburg Water System Williamsburg Co. Water & Sewer Authority Williamsburg County, SC	CWS	03/14/2001	No			04/05/2002	12/10/2003
37	Chasehunt Farms Phases III & IV Pine Ridge Development Company Lexington County, SC	CWS	08/08/2000	No			05/01/2002	04/16/2003
38	Nature's Spirit Nature's Spirit Oconee County, SC	CWS	08/24/2000	No		08/21/2003		
39	R. Clay Sparrow R. Clay Sparrow Cherokee County, SC	NTNC	03/12/2001	No			05/24/2003	
40	Vances Ferry Condominiums R. Arnold Hutto Orangeburg County, SC	CWS	06/22/2001	No		08/03/2003		
41	Whiskey South Apartments Now Cedar Creek Village Aiken County, SC	CWS	01/17/2002	No			01/09/2004	03/26/2004

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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42	Pine Ridge Subdivision B. Gerald Kimbrell Jr. Chester County, SC	CWS	03/29/1999	No		06/15/2003		
43	Doby's Mill Elementary School Kershaw County School District Kershaw County, SC	NTNC	06/05/2001	No			06/05/2002	07/24/2002
44	S C Advanced Technology Park Tri-County Alliance, Inc. Barnwell County, SC	NTNC	11/22/2001	No			12/20/2001	02/03/2003
45	EMS/Fire Station & Magistrate Office Charleston County Charleston County, SC	NTNC	02/07/2003	No			09/22/2003	02/04/2005
46	The Anchorage II Community Rec. Area Southern Lifestyles Charleston County, SC	NTNC	04/29/2003	No			07/09/2007	01/09/2008
47	There is Hope Shelter Lexington County, SC	NTNC	06/02/2003	No		07/10/2009		
48	Victorious Valley Home & Academy Victorious Valley Home Pickens County, SC	CWS	06/18/2003	No		01/17/2006	04/01/2004	

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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49	Lake Marion Regional Water System Santee Cooper Orangeburg County, SC	CWS	08/21/2003	No			06/30/2004	09/30/2009
50	Diakonia Center Greek Orthodox Metro Atlanta Oconee County, SC	CWS	09/29/2003	No			04/30/2004	10/14/2004
51	Sandy Oaks Subdivision Collins & Wright Development Lexington County, SC	CWS	10/29/2003	No			03/15/2005	09/15/2005 Merged #3250058 04/01/2008
52	Taylor Equestrian Center Calvary Performance Horses LLC Beaufort County, SC	CWS	09/25/2003	No			08/25/2004	07/12/2005
53	Fish Hatchery Road Estates RR & C LLC Developers Lexington County, SC	CWS	04/01/2004	No			05/19/2005	07/18/2006
54	Cliffs at Keowee Falls - South Keowee Investment Group Oconee County, SC	CWS	03/02/2004	No			05/07/2007	Merged Into Town of Salem #3710001
55	City of Tega Cay City of Tega Cay York County, SC	CWS	12/09/1999	No			01/12/2000	06/22/2000

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2026

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56	Blackwater Development Phase I Blackwater Development LLC Orangeburg County, SC	CWS	12/20/2003	No			03/17/2004	03/23/2006
57	Naomi Child Development Center William Dwight Richland County, SC	NTNC	03/16/2004	No			09/10/2004	01/18/2005
58	SCAD Equestrian Center North Savannah Properties LLC Jasper County, SC	NTNC	02/09/2005	No			04/14/2006	
59	Medical University of SC Medical University Hospital Authority Charleston County, SC	CWS	03/29/2005	No			08/17/2005	
60	J P Acres Joel Player Lexington County, SC	CWS	05/04/2005	No		09/23/2008		
61	Stono View Tract St. Marks LLC Charleston County, SC	CWS	06/06/2005	No		08/13/2008		
62	Trolley Run Fine Deering Development Group Aiken County, SC	CWS	09/22/2005	No			05/15/2006	05/03/2007

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
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63	The Preserve at Lake Marion American Natural Resources LLC Calhoun County, SC	CWS	10/05/2005	No		08/12/2008		
64	Bridlewood Farms Old South Investments, Inc. Dorchester County, SC	CWS	10/11/2005	No		08/12/2008		
65	Trinity Episcopal Church Trinity Episcopal Church Charleston County, SC	NTNC	11/03/2005	No			12/21/2005	01/24/2007
66	Cuddo Point Subdivision Watson's Pride LLC Clarendon County, SC	CWS	12/15/2005	No		Apr 7 2009		
67	Clearwater of Cherokee Blacksburg/Cherokee LLC Cherokee County, SC	CWS	04/11/2006	No			09/26/2006	
68	Grant Allendale Inc. Georgia-Pacific Allendale County, SC	NTNC	06/06/2006	No			07/10/2006	12/27/2006
69	Larimer Center Sea Island Comp. Health Care Corp. Charleston County, SC	NTNC	07/24/2006	No			09/15/2006	03/13/2007

Capacity Development Authority
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70	Wild Turkey S/D Phase II Ness Company, Inc. Lexington County, SC	CWS	09/08/2006	No		08/13/2008		
71	Cottageville Elementary School Colleton County Schools Colleton County, SC	NTNC	02/07/2007	No			07/01/2008	08/19/2008
72	Hopewell AME Church & Day Care Hopewell AME Church, Inc. Georgetown County, SC	NTNC	04/02/2007	No			06/21/2007	
73	Greene's MHP Greene & Bush Family Business Cherokee County, SC	CWS	05/22/2007	No			08/23/2007	
74	Grant Forest Products Clarendon Georgia-Pacific Clarendon County, SC	NTNC	07/31/2007	No			09/06/2007	02/14/2011
75	New Highway 165 High School Dorchester County Public Works Dorchester County, SC	NTNC	08/16/2007	No			11/06/2007	08/24/2009
76	Great Waters Subdivision Secession Development LLC Abbeville County, SC	CWS	08/30/2007	No			Revised 04/17/2017	06/28/2017

Capacity Development Authority
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77	Sunset Development Developer Kenneth L. Dinger Pickens County, SC	CWS	09/10/2007	No		05/15/2017	12/28/2007	
78	Highpointe Clemson Developer Tom Winkopp Oconee County, SC	CWS	11/15/2007	No			12/20/2007	07/01/2008
79	Wateree Retreat Center Wateree Baptist Retreat Center Richland County, SC	CWS	06/13/2008	No			07/20/2009	
80	CM Steel Charlotte Misc. Steel, Inc. York County, SC	NTNC	06/18/2008	No			10/13/2009	11/06/2009
81	Springs at Summerville Continental 211 Fund LLC Dorchester County, SC	CWS	06/19/2008	No			01/12/2009	
82	Rawl Migrant Camp W P Rawl & Sons, Inc. Lexington County, SC	NTNC	04/27/2009	No			02/23/2010	09/16/2010
83	Sweetwater Sweetwater, Inc. Cherokee County, SC	CWS	05/21/2009	No		06/02/2009		

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
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84	Hwy 301/US 76 Water System Orangeburg County Orangeburg County, SC	CWS	04/28/2010	No			04/30/2010	11/08/2010
85	Berkeley Elec. Cooperative - Awendaw Berkeley Elec. Cooperative, Inc. Charleston County, SC	NTNC	05/16/2009	No			04/20/2011	03/20/2012
86	Whetstone Academy Whetstone Academy Oconee County, SC	NTNC	04/13/2011	No			02/06/2012	06/03/2012
87	Georgia-Pacific Clarendon Plant Georgia-Pacific Corp. Clarendon County, SC	NTNC	04/28/2011	No			08/11/2011	12/08/2011
88	Jim Hudson Cars of Lexington Jim Hudson Cars of Lexington, SC LLC Lexington County, SC	NTNC	10/20/2011	No			12/22/2011	02/03/2012
89	Sunny Acres MHP Manufactured Home Park Edgefield County, SC	CWS (Now State)	10/29/2008	No			Revised 10/21/2016	02/17/2017
90	Exit 42 Truck Stop Garvin Oil Company Colleton County, SC	NTNC	05/14/2012	No			11/19/2012	

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
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91	Sardis Baptist Church Sardis Baptist Church Lexington County, SC	NTNC	07/06/2012	No			05/22/2013	11/11/2013
92	Stuart Point HOA Stuart Point Home Owners Association Beaufort County, SC	CWS	10/10/2012	No			11/19/2013	01/04/2014
93	Red Hill Baptist Ch. Family Life Center Red Hill Baptist Church Richland County, SC	NTNC	01/02/2014	No			02/06/2014	05/29/2015
94	Snowhill Child Development Center Vanessa Montgomery Williamsburg County, SC	NTNC	04/15/2015	Yes			12/21/2015	
95	Metrolina Greenhouses Metrolina Greenhouses York County, SC	NTNC	04/28/2015	Yes			05/18/2015	
96	Broad River Campground Broad River Campground Fairfield County, SC	NTNC (Now Transient)	12/23/2015	No			03/14/2016	10/03/2016
97	A & R Bulk Pak Berkeley County Water & Sanitation Berkeley County	NTNC (Now State)	07/22/2015	No			08/25/2015	03/31/2017

Capacity Development Authority
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98	Davant Plantation Congaree Golf Partners Jasper County, SC	NTNC (Now Transient)	12/14/2015	No			11/18/2016	02/21/2017
99	Mouzon Water System Williamsburg County WSA Williamsburg County, SC	CWS	10/09/2017	Yes			03/21/2018	
100	Palmetto Health Richland Prisma Health Richland County, SC <i>[This groundwater system was funded by FEMA and approved for use as an emergency well/potable source by Prisma Health Palmetto Hospital in Columbia in the rare instance the municipal water system is out of service for a period of time.]</i>	NTNC	05/24/2016	No			07/18/2018	Inactive

Capacity Development Authority
Summary of Permitting Decisions for Applications for Proposed Water Systems
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101	Tidelands Health Tidelands Health Huger Well Georgetown County, SC <i>[This groundwater system was funded by FEMA and approved for use as an emergency well/potable source by Tidelands Health Hospital in Georgetown in the rare instance the municipal water system is out of service for a period of time.]</i>	NTNC	12/06/2017	Yes			02/26/2019	Inactive
102	The Lake Club Deep Water Point LLC Newberry County	CWS	03/05/2017	Yes			12/03/2019	Inactive
103	Wren Rd Trailer Park	CWS	11/23/2021				11/23/2021	11/23/2021
104	Quiet Lane MHP	CWS	02/16/2022				04/25/2023	11/15/2023
105	Haigler Farms Partnership (migrant housing)	NTNC	05/25/2023	No			10/18/2023	03/13/2024

Capacity Development Authority
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106	Pinnacle Partners of the Carolinas Inc (RV Park)	Transient NC	02/06/2023				09/20/2024	
107	CDP Leesville Inc	Transient NC	09/19/2024	No			10/15/2024	12/19/2024
108	Metrolina Greenhouses Inc	NTNC	05/02/2024	No			12/03/2024	05/28/2025
109	Station Land Co LLC, The (Golf Course)	Transient NC	01/09/2025				01/17/2025	01/17/2025
110	Logan Lowder (RV Park)	Transient NC	06/21/2024	No			09/10/2024	05/02/2025
111	Northpoint Campground	Transient NC	09/12/2025	No			12/16/2025	04/07/2026
112	Xtreme Property Management LLC (RV Park)	Transient NC	09/03/2025				12/19/2025	05/07/2026

Capacity Development Authority
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113	SC Dept of Natural Resources (Skeet range pavillion)	Transient NC	04/03/2025				07/09/2025	09/18/2025
114	CR Jackson	NTNC	07/30/2025				10/03/2025	02/17/2026
115	Will Howard/May River Forest LLC Palmetto Bluff - Anson Golf Facility	Transient NC	09/26/2025				11/07/2025	05/26/2026
116	Edisto Island Youth Recreation	Transient NC	11/20/2025				12/19/2025	
117	Charleston Co Public Works Dept Edisto Island EMS Station 8	Transient NC	12/11/2024				06/19/2026	
⁽¹⁾ Decision is pending for a follow-up or one-step construction permit only, not test well								

ATTACHMENT II

Summary of Compliance Violations & Last Sanitary Survey Ratings of Systems Placed into Operation over the Last Five Fiscal Years

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**Summary of Compliance Violations & Last Sanitary Survey Ratings of Systems Placed into Operation over the Last Five Fiscal Years
Placed into Operation from Fiscal Year 2022 through 2026**

	System Name / Owner	System Number	System Type at Permitting	Date Approval to Place System into Operation Issued	Last Sanitary Survey Rating	Compliance Violations Since Approval to Operate Issued
No applicable systems during this time period						
*RTC = Returned to Compliance						

ATTACHMENT III

South Carolina AWOP Annual Report for 2025

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South Carolina AWOP Annual Report for 2025

April 2026

Prepared For:

U.S. EPA Region 4 Multi-State
Area Wide Optimization Program

Prepared By:

SC DES Bureau of Water
Drinking Water Protection Division
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201



Maintaining the Program

South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES's) began participating in the EPA's National Area-Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) in 1997. The goal of the drinking water optimization program is to maximize public health protection by setting and meeting stringent water treatment plant water distribution performance goals. The Area Wide Optimization program is flexible and adaptable in order to set goals in other areas of drinking water like lead and copper corrosion control, contaminants of emerging concern, and operation and maintenance techniques and procedures.

Identify & Address Institutional Challenges

Database migration coupled with staff and workflow process changes led to some data irregularities. These record keeping challenges made evaluation of AWOP achievement difficult, though staff have given best efforts to compiling these data in preparation of this report. Numbers largely align with those of past years.

Internal Support

Internal support for the program remains high. SCDES's Director, Myra Reece, participates in our AWOP awards program annually and continues to have positive comments about the program and the water systems that achieve the optimized performance goals. She has made several comments complimenting staff and encouraging SCDES and water system staff to continue our efforts. EPA Region 4 continues to provide statements that are read to the attendees. Many water systems publish their own media stories and share pictures of their receipt of the award. Most water plants proudly display the award and poster.

Optimization continues to be encouraged in all water program areas. Optimization has been applied via data reviews and analysis, sampling protocol reviews, assessing potential for special studies, and sampling more than the minimum required in the regulation.

Most of the funding for South Carolina's program comes from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program. An annual report to EPA Region 4 and tri-annual report to the Governor, compiled through the SRF program, includes a large AWOP section.

Core Team Structure & Capacity

South Carolina's Core AWOP Team Members

AWOP Team Member	Position	CPE Training Status
Doug Kinard, PE	Division Director	Complete
Richard Welch, Jr., PE	Section Manager	Complete
Lindsey Bounds	Environmental Engineer	Complete
Tracy Scott	Environmental Engineer	1 CPE's remaining
Rene Chavis	Environmental Engineer	3 CPE's remaining

*Certified water treatment and/or wastewater plant operator.

Water System Status

Microbial Ranking Criteria & Optimization

The SCDES AWOP team has developed a priority ranking system to facilitate surface water systems prioritization with respect to public health risk potential. This system has been very successful and has been reevaluated several times since its development. The prioritization allows the team to apply resources and optimization tools where the need is greatest. The scoring worksheet used to evaluate each plant considers a 2-year regulatory compliance (MCL, treatment technique), sanitary survey results from a 2-year period, and operational data (turbidity measurements) taken over a 1-year period. Using this worksheet has allowed the team to focus on those systems that have the greatest need for optimized performance.

Microbial Ranking Criteria Worksheet

2-year regulatory compliance	Points (Per #)	Results of last 2 Sanitary Surveys	Points (Per #)
# Acute MCL violations	40	# Overall unsatisfactory surveys	40
# MCL violations	20	# Overall needs improvement surveys	20
# Treatment technique violations	20	# Individual items unsatisfactory	10
		# Individual items need improvement	5

Operational Data based on 1-year					
Filtered Turbidity		Settled Turbidity		Raw Turbidity	
# days > 1 NTU	20	# days > 10 NTU	5	# days > 250 NTU	5
# days > 0.5 NTU	10	# days > 5 NTU	2	# days > 100 NTU	2
# days > 0.3 NTU	2	# days > 2 NTU	0.5	# days > 50 NTU	1
# days > 0.1 NTU	1			# days > 25 NTU	0.5

Is plant operated 24/hr day?	No = 20 points
Does plant have more than one clearwell?	No = 20 points

Prioritized List of Plants

The table below shows the current list of the worst performing plants and performance numbers for 2025. In addition, the table shows the corresponding water system ranking in 2024.

Microbial Status Component

2025 Rank	PWS	2024 Rank
1.	Aiken	5
2.	Walhalla	2
3.	Batesburg-Leesville	4
4.	Breezy Hill	14
5.	Cheraw	8
6.	Woodruff Roebuck	10
7.	Newberry	33
8.	Saluda County WSA	21
9.	Abbeville	20
10.	Chester Metro	18

During 2025, 41 of the 59 active surface water treatment plants were optimized for turbidity. The optimization program continues to be discussed during the annual sanitary survey at each surface water treatment plant. Charts and data for the time since the last survey of that water system are presented and discussed. The sanitary survey report also contains an in-depth section on the optimization and reporting of plant performance.

DBP Optimization

The DBP goals used to determine optimization were developed by the EPA Technical Support Center. DBP data is collected by the team and input into spreadsheets. To determine optimization with respect to the DBP goals, locational running annual averages (LRAA's) are calculated and the maximum LRAA is taken from each location for a 1-year period. All of the maximums are averaged, and the average of these maximums must be less than 60 ug/l for trihalomethanes (THMs) and less than 40 ug/l for halo acetic acids (HAAs).

Average of Maximum LRAA Determination Worksheet (example data)

System Name	Sample Site	2013				2014			
		Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
	1	27	69	101	44	24	59	120	35
	2	30	75	95	53	35	90	128	55
	3	29	52	78	41	21	50	98	37
	4	25	79	105	53	21	36	90	26
	LRAA 1	4 Quarters are for site 1			60	60	57	62	60
	LRAA 2	“ “			63	65	68	77	77
	LRAA 3	“ “			50	48	48	53	52
	LRAA 4	“ “			66	65	54	50	43
	MAX LRAA	Max from any site			66	65	68	77	77
	Avg of Max LRAA’s								71
	DBP Goal								60

South Carolina continues to show DBP optimization success at our surface water treatment plants and the distribution systems they serve. The tables below show the number and percentage of surface water treatment plants and distribution systems they serve that were optimized for DBPs in 2025 as well as a comparison to the results of 2024.

DBP Status Component (Surface Water Systems)

Optimization Metric	2024 n=52		2025 n=51	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Met THM Compliance	51	98	50	98
HAA Compliance	52	100	51	100
THM Goal	44	85	43	84
HAA Goal	45	87	47	92
TOC Goal	44	85	42	82
ALL Goals	30	58	30	59

DBP Status Component (Surface Water Purchase Systems)

Optimization Metric	2024 n=174		2025 n=173	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Wholesalers in compliance	172	99	160	92
Wholesalers met goals	107	61	124	72
THM Compliance	174	100	162	94
HAA Compliance	174	100	163	94
THM Goal	164	94	154	89
HAA Goal	169	97	160	92
ALL Goals	159	91	149	86

TPI Implementation

Building Awareness & Recognition

Since the beginning of AWOP in South Carolina, our team has worked to continually build awareness of the importance for optimized performance. Though the team members have changed, the importance of optimization has not diminished. With the advent of disinfection byproducts optimization, the program focus has broadened with the addition of more technical aspects and new tools for improving optimized performance.

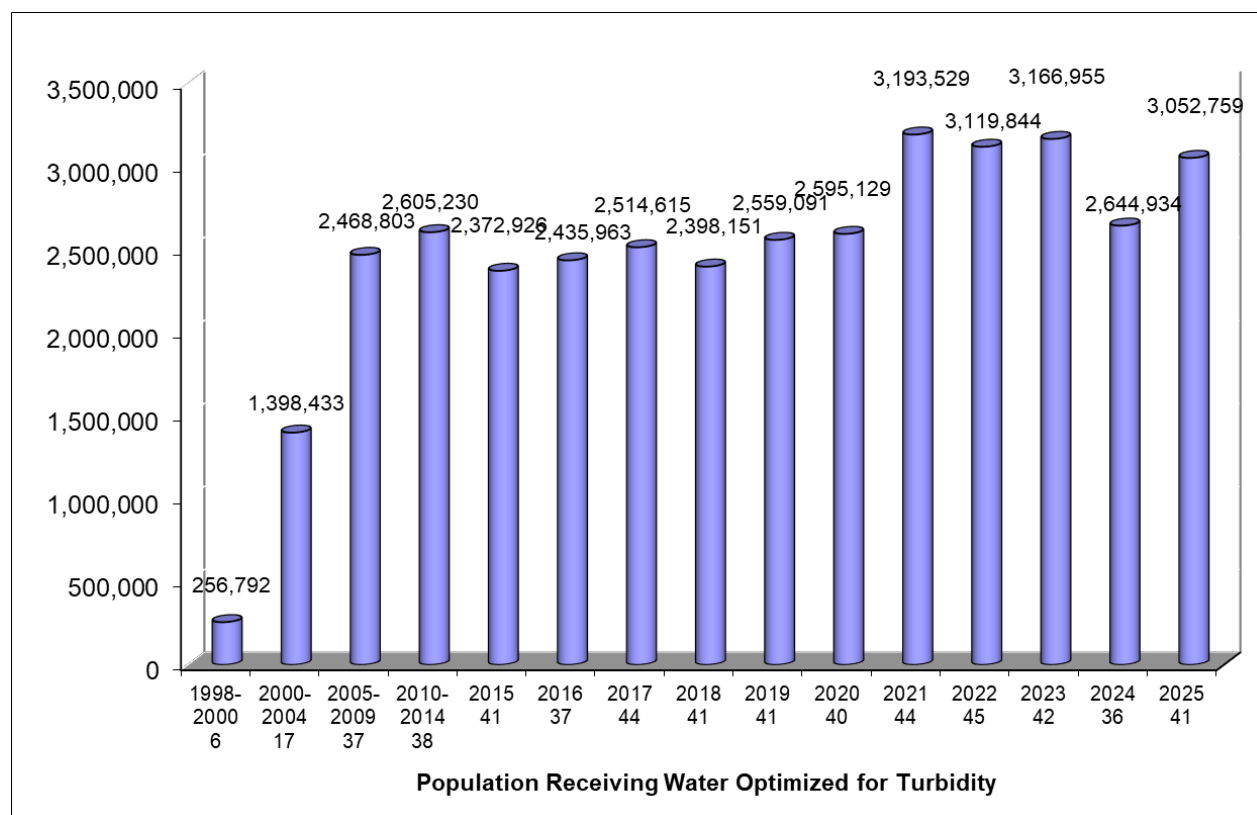
The AWOP awards and recognition program, initiated in 2001, has been held annually to celebrate the water system's accomplishments. Many water systems that receive an award have accompanying press releases in their local media outlets.

AWOP Impacts

Tangible Impacts from Targeted Activities

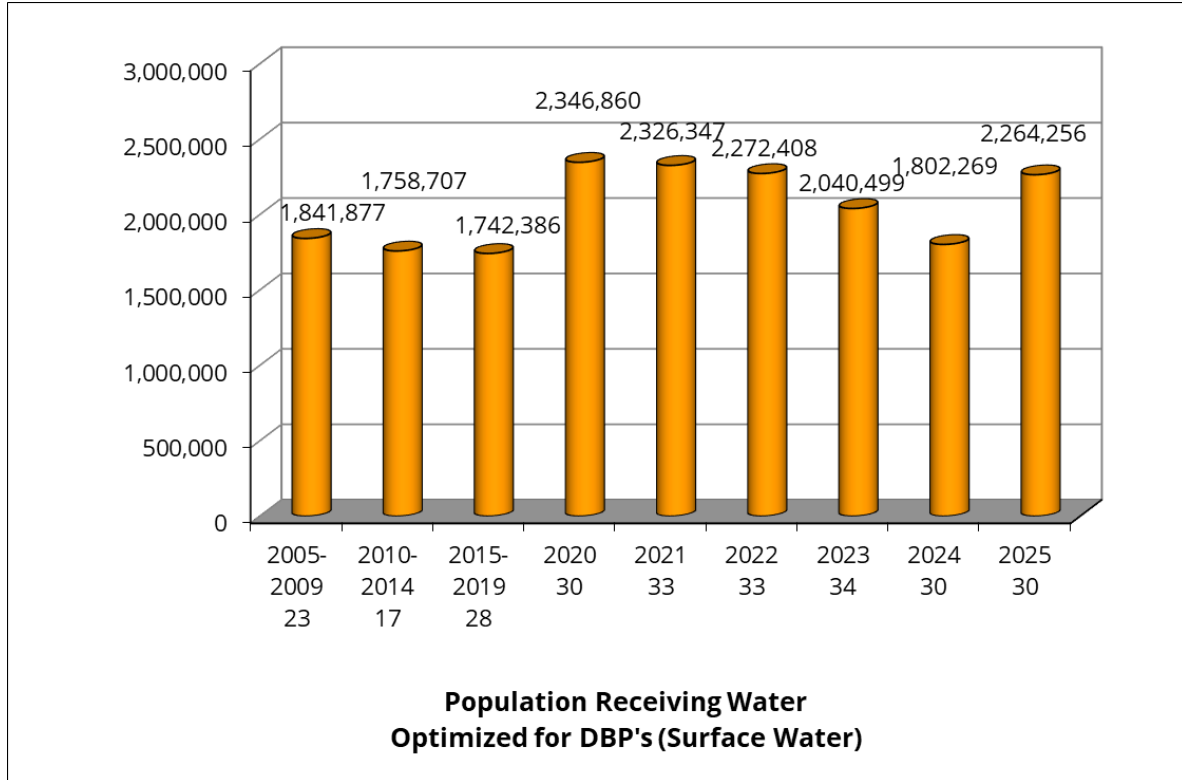
Below is a table showing the number of populations in South Carolina that receive water from a surface water treatment plant optimized for turbidity removal.

Population Served by Surface Water Plants Optimized for Turbidity



The above chart shows the population served by optimized plants. The population served by optimized plants (met settled & filtered goal) was 48,799 in 1998 and approximately 3 million in 2025. In 2025, approximately 3.5 million people in South Carolina were supplied with drinking water from surface water plants (State population approximately 5 million), meaning approximately 86% of those people received drinking water from a plant optimized for microbial protection. 2025 was somewhat of a “bounce back year” with more plants serving more people being optimized than in 2024. These data align with those of the early 2020s.

Population Receiving Water from Surface Water Plants Optimized for DBP's



The above chart shows the population receiving water directly from DBP-optimized plants (surface water treatment plants). Most water systems in South Carolina do not have trouble meeting the HAA or THM goals and the goal that was missed most often is the TOC removal goal due to low levels of TOC in source water. Similar to the story with turbidity, DBP optimization “bounced back” in 2025 and defied the downward trend seen in recent years in terms of population served by systems optimized for DBPs, though the overall number of optimized plant remained unchanged.

Intangible Impacts from Targeted Activities

Inspiring Innovation:

Since the beginning of the program, SCDES’s AWOP team has been recognized as a national leader in the program. Team members are routinely called upon to present at national meetings and regional workshops. The worksheets and innovative approaches to data management and collection have been shared with and adopted by other states. Our staff is often asked by other states to assist with their inspections and comprehensive water plant and distribution system evaluations.

Embracing Service:

Our team has found that the regulated community wants to exceed the present regulatory requirements to prevent violations and enforcement actions. AWOP has been very helpful in South

Carolina by reducing non-compliance, developing a better relationship with the regulated community, and helping build expertise in both our staff and water treatment professionals.

Relationships with the regulated community:

In South Carolina, the regulated community continues to respond to the raised scrutiny on public health protection. Through the optimization efforts, most drinking water operators view themselves as professionals responsible for their customers' well-being. With the implementation of each new federal drinking water regulation, the water systems learn to adjust operations and to think of regulatory requirements as minimums, not targets.

AWOP Testimonials:

"The South Carolina Area Wide Optimization Program has aided us in producing water that is at a greater level of public health protection by exceeding regulatory requirements for particle removal. Twice a year, we host citizen awareness groups called "Inside Rock Hill". During the tours, we show these citizens our live SCADA data. Most citizens are amazed and appreciative when they can witness the turbidity levels decreasing as it moves throughout treatment to our finished product."

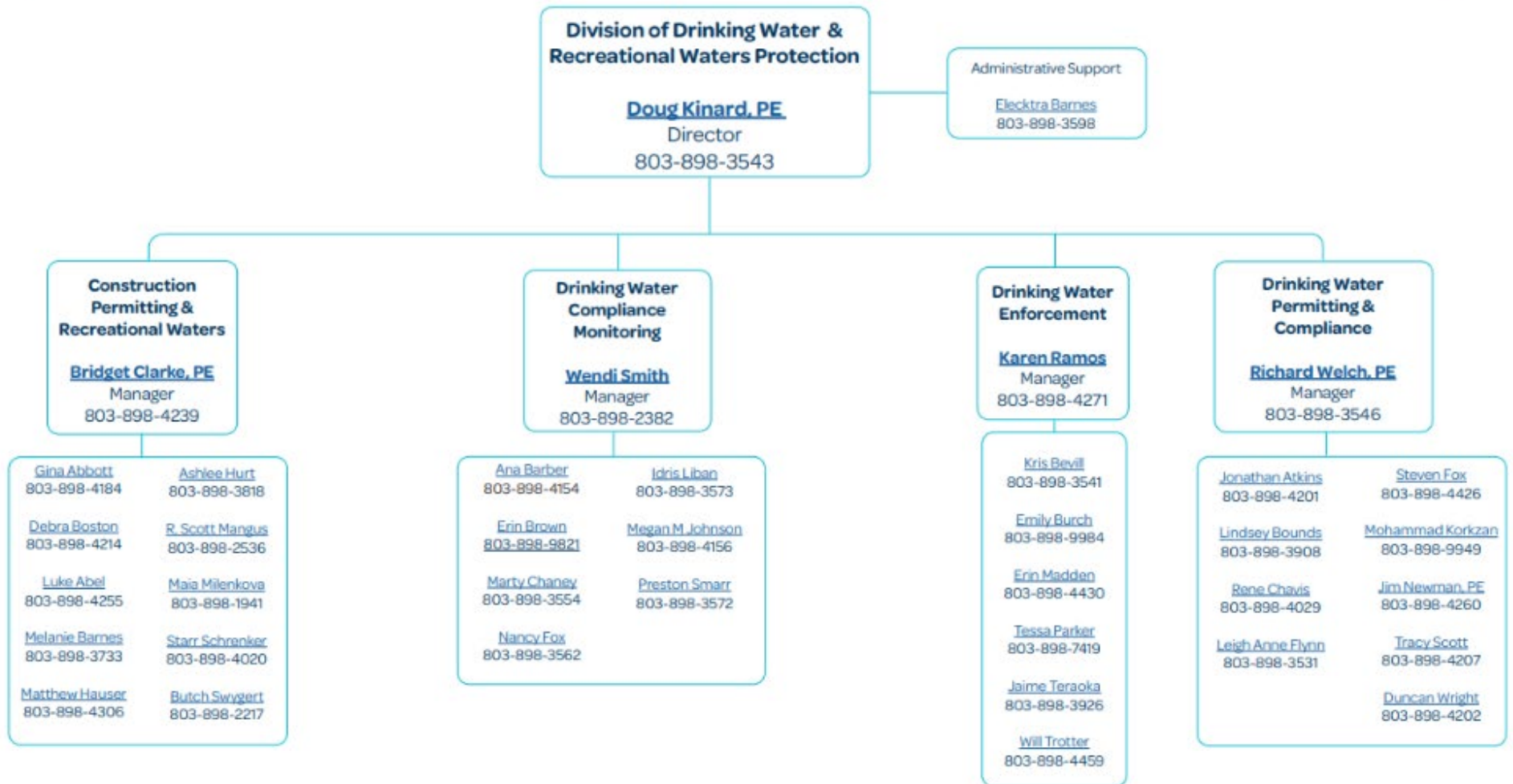
Susan Featherstone, Former Water/Wastewater Superintendent, City of Rock Hill

"The EPA Region 4 AWOP Team wants to acknowledge the tremendous leadership of DHEC in supporting AWOP both in South Carolina and nationally. From the support of senior levels of management right through to the ranks of staff in DHEC's Drinking Water Protection Division, the continued commitment shown by this agency is second to none among states involved in the program. SC AWOP staff here represent your work very effectively to the national network. We at EPA count them as national leaders of this program."

EPA Region 4 AWOP Team, Drinking Water Section, Atlanta, GA

Lessons Learned

SCDES's AWOP program continues to serve as a model for other programs to do more with less (i.e. getting the most out of what you have). "Optimization thinking" has been encouraged in other program areas. Because South Carolina AWOP bridges across several sections (compliance, monitoring, permitting, SRF), managers and staff in the other programs have been exposed to AWOP and made aware of the successes.



ATTACHMENT IV
SCRWA Annual Summary for SFY 2026

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SCRWA Annual Summary SFY 2026

(July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

SCDES Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program — Prepared by SCRWA for SCDES Bureau of Water

This annual summary compiles SCRWA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) technical assistance activities for State Fiscal Year 2026, drawing on the quarterly program summaries submitted to SCDES for July–September 2025, October–December 2025, January–March 2026, and April–June 2026. Full descriptions of each project can be found in the corresponding Quarterly Reports.

Regulatory Compliance Assistance / Sustainability / Water Loss

This ongoing project continued throughout SFY 2026. SCRWA Circuit Riders Jerry Baxley, Philip Jolley, and (beginning May 2026) Brandon Abernathy engaged with small drinking water systems across the state on the following activities:

- Provided critical assistance to systems facing enforcement action and SCDES Office of Rural Water (ORW) referrals
- Discussed and provided guidance on general sanitary survey compliance
- Assisted systems with hydrant flow testing, hydrant repair, valve exercising, line flushing, and leak detection
- Provided system assistance with meter inventories, well maintenance, tank maintenance, and operational procedures
- Trained personnel on basic and AWWA water audit software to evaluate and reduce water loss
- Assisted systems with SRF loan applications, grant applications (RIA VIP, RIA Sustainability, BRIC), and required financial audits
- Conducted comprehensive water rate studies and assisted with Capital Improvement Program (CIP) planning
- Informed and trained systems on Asset Management Programs and assisted with onsite implementation

Visits

Jerry Baxley (Statewide Regulatory Compliance)

- Jul–Sep 2025: Technical assistance provided to 19 systems (multiple systems visited more than once); 17 additional systems reached by telephone
- Oct–Dec 2025: Technical assistance provided to 21 systems; 19 additional systems reached by telephone
- Jan–Mar 2026: 27 total technical assistance visits; 22 telephone contacts
- Apr–Jun 2026: 23 total technical assistance visits; 27 telephone contacts

Ricky Ingram / Philip Jolley (Regional Regulatory Compliance)

- Jul–Sep 2025 (Ricky Ingram): 13 systems visited for treatment process and asset management evaluation
- Oct–Dec 2025 (Philip Jolley): 12 systems visited; 3 systems reached by telephone
- Jan–Mar 2026 (Philip Jolley, focused almost exclusively on Calhoun Falls): 2 total visits; 3 telephone contacts

Brandon Abernathy (joined program May 1, 2026)

- May–Jun 2026: 20 total technical assistance visits, concentrated on grant applications and rate studies

Notable Projects

Wallace Water Company (System # 3420002) Contacts: Jeremy Steen, Maxine Knight

During a period of extreme winter cold, SCRWA responded to a full-scale supply and pressure emergency at Wallace Water Company. The system's limited well capacity, combined with the simultaneous loss of its two wholesale supply connections — the City of Bennettsville (itself overwhelmed by freeze-related customer leaks and a surface water plant knocked offline by a dam failure at Lake Paul Wallace) and a constrained interconnection with Marlboro Water Company — left large sections of the system, including the Hatcher Hill area and the stretch along Highway 177 near the North Carolina line, with little or no pressure for several days. SCRWA staff embedded with Wallace management and field staff over four days, monitoring customer meter readings and system pressure, flagging customer leaks as they were found, and coordinating with DES regional staff and local media on the town's behalf. Operation of the Marlboro Water Company pump station was restored, delivering roughly 50 gallons per minute, and Bennettsville's supply to Wallace resumed, gradually restoring pressure to the upper system. SCRWA continues to work with Wallace's consulting engineers on a permanent solution after a new well under construction proved unsuccessful, exploring alternate well sites and additional interconnections.

Calhoun Falls, Town of (System # 0110002) Contacts: Roy Willoughby, LaSean Tutt, Mayor Viggo Lassen

SCRWA's multi-year effort to stabilize Calhoun Falls continued throughout SFY 2026. Building on the pressure restoration and meter-donation work completed the prior fiscal year, staff shifted focus to the town's roughly 120 non-functioning water meters, lead and copper sampling and notification requirements, and a persistent gap between what the town bills and what it should collect. SCRWA helped the town assemble and mail lead and copper notification letters, walked staff through corrected minimum-bill calculations for apartment complexes projected to add roughly \$25,000–\$35,000 in annual revenue, and documented that meters left unread and billed at the minimum rate were likely costing the town thousands of dollars a month in lost revenue. With the town without a Utility Director for much of the year and a newly elected Mayor, Viggo Lassen, Philip Jolley dedicated the bulk of his time to Calhoun Falls, sourcing used-but-functional meters from systems around the state, training staff on proper meter reading and customer communication, investigating leaks, and verifying tank capacity. SCRWA also continued routine compliance visits with council members LaSean Tutt and Viggo Lassen and provided budgeting guidance for the Utility department.

Oswego Rural Water Company (System # 4320006) Contacts: Patrick Posey (Board Chairman), Rita Kennon (Office Manager)

After the City of Sumter notified Oswego Rural Water that it would discontinue the operation, maintenance, meter reading, and billing services it had provided for many years (effective May 2027), SCRWA stepped in to help the system's board and staff prepare to take over full operation of a system serving 1,329 residential and 32 commercial connections. SCRWA walked the board through DES sanitary survey and operational requirements, helped identify and vet a qualified contract distribution operator with a strong regional reputation, and worked with Board Chairman Patrick Posey on reducing water loss and non-revenue water, which has already improved. SCRWA is continuing to assist Oswego as it evaluates metering options and billing software ahead of the 2027 transition.

Lake City, City of (System # 2110007) Contacts: Administrator Malik Whitaker, Utilities Director Ricky Simms

SCRWA's sustained assistance to Lake City produced some of the year's clearest financial results. SCRWA developed the City's Risk and Resilience Plan in-house, saving an estimated \$50,000 compared with hiring an engineering firm, and separately assisted with the City's Drought Response Plan review. Following SCRWA's

help designing a new water rate structure — which is generating approximately \$40,000 in additional monthly revenue — and other efficiency measures, the City's revenues increased by nearly \$90,000 in the month of June alone. SCRWA also assisted with the City's annual water tank inspections, reducing costs while keeping the system in compliance, and continues to work with the City on Capital Improvement Program projects and available matching grant funds.

Lynchburg, Town of (System # 3110002) Contacts: Jackie McDonald (Town Clerk), Shawn Kennedy

SCRWA continued a multi-quarter effort to bring Lynchburg into compliance with its DES Consent Order. Staff completed a full customer meter survey to document previously unread accounts and encouraged the town to begin billing higher-use accounts — including its only car wash and laundromat — as soon as possible to bring in badly needed revenue. The town's second well, out of service for months, was repaired by Professional Pump and Well Company with SCRWA coordination, and SCRWA technicians worked with the town's contractor to determine the material of service lines previously listed as "unknown." SCRWA will continue assisting the Town with compliance activities toward satisfying its Consent Order.

McColl, Town of (System # 3410003) Contacts: Billing Clerk Tammy Goff, City Clerk Tamekia McClain, Utilities Director Johnny Jones

SCRWA worked closely with McColl's leadership on financial sustainability, assisting with a RIA VIP Grant application and helping the Town work toward finalizing overdue annual financial audits required for state and federal grant eligibility. SCRWA also developed a preliminary strategy for presenting water rate increase recommendations to Town Council to improve the long-term financial sustainability of the utility, and assisted the Town in preparing and submitting a BRIC grant application to fund emergency backup generation and improve system resiliency.

System Mapping (GIS Mapping Program)

This ongoing project, led by GIS Program Manager Chris Yardley, continued to offer high-quality utility mapping services to small rural systems across South Carolina, serving both drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Staff digitized existing maps, collected infrastructure location data in the field, trained system personnel on the use and loan of SCRWA mapping equipment, and delivered finished maps in both hard copy and digital format.

During SFY 2026, ten (10) water and wastewater utilities were assisted through the GIS Mapping Program: Calhoun Falls, Springfield, North, Bethune, Langley Water & Sewer District, Pinewood, Hickory Grove, Blackville, Elloree, and Perry.

- Calhoun Falls, Town of — full system mapping (Drinking Water and Clean Water assets) completed and delivered, Q3 2025
- Springfield, Town of — Drinking Water mapping completed Q3 2025; Wastewater mapping completed and delivered Q1 2026
- Pinewood, Town of — Drinking Water and Clean Water asset mapping completed and delivered, Q1 2026
- Langley Water & Sewer District — Drinking Water and Clean Water asset mapping completed and delivered, Q2 2026
- North, Town of and Bethune, Town of — onsite mapping completed; building of final maps and delivery followed in subsequent quarters
- Blackville, Town of; Elloree Water System; Perry, Town of; Hickory Grove, Town of — mapping and Asset Management Program development began in FY26 and continues into SFY 2027

Training

SCRWA drinking water staff attended or supported the following training and special events during SFY 2026, with many sessions qualifying for Continuing Education Hours (CEHs):

- SC AWWA / WEASC Water Loss Workshop (Lexington, October 2025) and monthly SC AWWA Water Loss Committee Teams meetings
- SCRWA Annual Conference (November 2025) and AWWA Operators Conference
- SCRWA Decision Makers Conference
- SCRWA Governance and Management Academy (Columbia)
- SCRWA DES Regulation Training; SCRWA Tank Training (EPA/DES storage tank sanitary protection regulations); SCRWA Hydrant Training (Chesterfield County Rural Water)
- Water Distribution Class continuing contact hours
- SCDES SRF DW/CW Collaboration meeting
- Disaster Preparedness Virtual Training (presented by Nick Rubin, SCRWA)
- Damage Assessment Training (Greenwood)
- SCRWA Low Country Meeting (Orangeburg, featuring State Climatologist Hope Mizzell, Water PIO Mike McGill, and DES's Richard Welch — approximately 75 attendees), SCRWA Upstate Meeting (Williamston), and SCRWA Regional Meetings statewide
- Pee Dee COG Meeting and SC DES Office of Rural Water Teams meetings
- Asset Management Program workshops (multiple sessions, 1-hour and 4-hour formats) presented through the GIS/mapping program

ATTACHMENT V
SC Operator Certification Program Report
April 2026

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SC Operator Certification Program

April 2026

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
The public health objectives of the guidelines are to ensure that: Customers of any public water system be provided with an adequate supply of safe, potable drinking water. Consumers are confident that their water is safe to drink. Public water system operators are trained and certified and that they have knowledge and understanding of the public health reasons for drinking water standards	• The state provides an affirmative statement that the state ensures the public health objectives are met by the OpCert program. <u>SECTION 40-23-40. Purpose of board.</u> <u>The purpose of the Environmental Certification Board is to protect the general public through the regulation of persons engaged in occupations appointed by the legislature for regulation by the board. These occupations are referred to in this chapter, collectively, as "environmental systems operators".</u> <u>The OpCert program ensures that public water system operators are trained and certified such that consumers are confident that they are being provided with an adequate supply of safe, potable drinking water.</u>	
Antibacksliding	• A statement to show that a state's OpCert program remains the same and that no backsliding has occurred since the last year, OR • A discussion of any policy changes AND a discussion to show policy, regulatory, or statutory changes do not alter the state OpCert program which a state had in place 12 months prior to the effective date of Final Guidelines unless the reduction can be justified by the state and is approved by EPA. <u>The Operator Certification Program remains the same and no backsliding has occurred since last year. No policy, regulatory, or statutory changes have been made to alter the state Operator Certification program in the prior 12 months.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
9 Baseline Standards		
<u>1. Authorization</u> As evidenced by an Attorney General's certification, or certification from delegated counsel, the state must have the legal authority to implement the program requiring the certification of operators of all community and nontransient noncommunity water systems and to require that the systems comply with the appropriate requirements of the program.	In annual reports, a state must submit the following if changes were made to regulation or statute: • Attorney General's Certification OR Certification from delegated counsel (must include a copy of the delegation), AND • Amend the initial or latest amended full program description and additional explanation (include discussion of meeting the antibacksliding provision, see above), AND • Copy of new regulations or statutes <u>No changes were made to the Environmental Certification Code of Laws, Chapter 23, Title 40 or the Environmental Certification Regulations Chapter 51.</u>	
<u>2. Classification of Systems, Facilities, and Operators</u> a) It must classify all community and nontransient noncommunity water systems based on indicators of potential health risk, which for example may include: (a) complexity, size, source water for treatment facilities, and (b) complexity, size for distribution systems. It must develop specific operator certification and renewal requirements for each level of classification.	<u>SECTION 40-23-30. Environmental systems operator licensure requirement.</u> <u>It is unlawful for a person to practice as an environmental systems operator in this State without prior authorization through licensure in accordance with this chapter.</u> <u>Classification of Operators:</u> <u>Water Treatment (SECTION 40-23-300): (A) A person employed as an operator of a public water treatment facility must hold a water treatment operator license issued by the board in the certification class required by this section. The required certification class must be determined based upon the treatment group of the public water system treatment facility where the operator is employed, as established by the Department of Health and Environmental Control pursuant to Section 44-55-40(K). The certification class required for each treatment group is as follows:</u> <u>(1) Group I treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "E" ' certification.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>(2) Group II treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "D" certification.</u> <u>(3) Group III treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "C" certification.</u> <u>(4) Group IV treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "C" certification.</u> <u>(5) Group V treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "B" ' certification.</u> <u>(6) Group VI treatment facilities require operators with at least a Class "A" certification.</u> <u>(B)(1) To be licensed by the board as a Trainee Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(2) To be licensed by the board as a Class "E" Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Trainee Operator license;</u> <u>(b) have completed high school or the equivalent;</u> <u>(c) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(d) have completed at least six months of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water treatment facility; and</u> <u>(e) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(3) To be licensed by the board as a Class "D" Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "E" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least one year of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water treatment facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>(4) To be licensed by the board as a Class "C" Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "D" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least two years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water treatment facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(5) To be licensed by the board as a Class "B" Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "C" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least three years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water treatment facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(6) To be licensed by the board as a Class "A" Water Treatment Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "B" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least four years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water treatment facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(7) To be licensed as a Bottled Water Class Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(b) have completed high school or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(c) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>Water Distribution (SECTION 40-23-310): (A) A person employed as an operator of a public water distribution system facility must hold a water distribution system operator license issued by the board in the certification class as required by this section. The required certification class must be determined based upon the distribution group of the public water distribution system facility where the operator is employed, as established by the Department of Health and Environmental Control pursuant to Section 44-55-40(L). The certification class required for each distribution group is as follows:</u> <u>(1) Group I distribution facilities do not require a certified operator.</u> <u>(2) Group II distribution facilities require operators with at least a Class "D" certification.</u> <u>(3) Group III distribution facilities require operators with at least a Class "C" certification.</u> <u>(4) Group IV distribution facilities require operators with at least a Class "B" certification.</u> <u>(5) Group V distribution facilities require operators with at least a Class "A" certification.</u> <u>(B)(1) To be licensed by the board as a Trainee Water Distribution System Operator, an applicant must submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(2) To be licensed by the board as a Class "D" Water Distribution System Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Trainee Operator license;</u> <u>(b) have completed high school or the equivalent;</u> <u>(c) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(d) have completed at least one year of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water distribution system facility; and</u> <u>(e) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>(3) To be licensed by the board as a Class "C" Water Distribution System Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "D" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least two years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water distribution system facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(4) To be licensed by the board as a Class "B" Water Distribution System Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "C" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least three years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water distribution system facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u> <u>(5) To be licensed by the board as a Class "A" Water Distribution System Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) hold a valid Class "B" operator certification;</u> <u>(b) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(c) have completed at least four years of actual operating experience as an operator of a public water distribution system facility or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(d) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee</u> <u>Bottled Water (SECTION 40-23-300): (A)(7) To be licensed as a Bottled Water Class Operator, an applicant must:</u> <u>(a) pass an examination approved by the board;</u> <u>(b) have completed high school or the equivalent; and</u> <u>(c) submit an application on forms approved by the board and the prescribed fee.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes																																																																																												
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	b) It must require owners of all community and nontransient noncommunity water systems to place the direct supervision of their water system, including each treatment facility and/or distribution system, under the responsible charge of an operator(s) holding a valid certification equal to or greater than the classification of the treatment facility and/or distribution system.	<u>WATER TREATMENT (SECTION 40-23-300).</u> <u>(A) A person employed as an operator of a public water treatment facility must hold a water treatment operator license issued by the board in the certification class required by this section. The required certification class must be determined based upon the treatment group of the public water system treatment facility where the operator is employed, as established by the Department of Health and Environmental Control pursuant to Section 44-55-40(K).</u>																																																																																																												
	c) It must require, at a minimum, that the operator(s) in responsible charge or equivalent must hold a valid certification equal to or greater than the classification	<u>WATER DISTRIBUTION (SECTION 40-23-310)</u> <u>(A) A person employed as an operator of a public water distribution system facility must hold a water distribution system operator license issued by the board in the certification class as required by this section. The required certification class must be determined based upon the distribution group of</u>																																																																																																												

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of their water system, including each treatment facility and distribution system, as determined by the state.	the public water distribution system facility where the operator is employed, <u>as established by the Department of Health and Environmental Control pursuant to Section 44-55-40(L).</u>	
d) It must require that all operating personnel making process control/system integrity decisions about water quality or quantity that affect public health be certified.	<u>SECTION 40-23-30. Environmental systems operator licensure requirement. It is unlawful for a person to practice as an environmental systems operator in this State without prior authorization through licensure in accordance with this chapter.</u> <u>SECTION 40-23-250. License as prerequisite to practice or offer to practice. No person may practice or offer to practice any licensed activity regulated by this chapter or use any advertisement, business card, or letterhead or make any other verbal or written communication asserting or suggesting that the person is available to engage in any licensed activity or acquiesce in such a representation unless that person has fully complied with this chapter and holds a current license issued by the board authorizing the person to perform the licensed activity.</u>	
e) It must require that a designated certified operator be available for each operating shift.	<u>R.51–7. Definitions.</u> <u>As used in S.C. Code Title 40, Chapter 23, and these regulations</u> <u>A. “Direct Supervision” means supervision provided by a licensee who must (a) be on-site or Immediately available to supervised persons via telephone, radio, or other electronic means: and (b) maintain continued involvement in appropriate aspects of each professional activity of the supervisee.</u>	
<u>3. Operator Qualifications</u> States must require the following for an operator to become certified:		
a) Take and pass an exam that demonstrates that the operator has the necessary skills, knowledge, ability and judgement as appropriate for the classification. All exam questions must be validated.	• An affirmative statement that state meets this requirement (see “a” to left). • Brief description of the examination events provided during the year. • Number of exams and type of exams (e.g., treatment and/or distribution, classification). • Percent passing in each exam classification.	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	• Exam question validation activities for the year (Short summary of issues reviewed, pass/fail rate, new questions, subject matter experts, psychometrician). <u>51–2. Examinations.</u> <u>A. Examinations, required for licensure, are approved by the board. An applicant may apply under the Americans’ with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provide documentation for consideration.</u> <u>B. An examination fee will be charged for each examination taken by an applicant.</u> <u>C. Such examinations as may be prescribed under this rule will be administered through a provider approved by the board.</u> <u>Environmental Certification Board adopted new standardized examinations on May 1, 2017 for Water Treatment, Water Distribution and Biological Wastewater Treatment. The exams were created and vetted by the Association of Boards of Certificate. Examinations are administered by computer at over 150 Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) assessment centers geographically located throughout the United States. The examinations are administered by appointment only, Monday-Saturday at 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. The cost of the exams is \$110 each; well drillers are \$90. A current listing of AMP Assessment Centers, including addresses and driving directions, can be found on AMP’s website. Available dates will be indicated when scheduling the examination. Candidates are scheduled on a first come,</u> <u>first served basis. Visit AMP’s website for additional information and instructions. www.goamp.com</u> <u>For Study Guidelines, refer to ABC’s website: www.abccert.org/testing_services</u> <u>The passing grade for all licensure levels ‘D’, ‘C’, ‘B’, and ‘A’ level examination is 70. The passing grade for Water Treatment ‘E’ level</u>	

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	<u>examination is 42. Examinations are closed book. Time limit for all level ‘E’, ‘D’, ‘C’, and ‘B’ is 3 hours. Time limits for level ‘A’ exams is 4 hours.</u> Distribution Operators Exam Pass / Fail Rates (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025) <table><tr><th>License Class</th><th>Total Examinees</th><th>Passed</th><th>Failed</th><th>Percent Passed</th><th>Percent Failed</th></tr><tr><td>A Distribution</td><td>92</td><td>39</td><td>53</td><td>42.3</td><td>57.6</td></tr><tr><td>B Distribution</td><td>121</td><td>58</td><td>63</td><td>47.9</td><td>52.0</td></tr><tr><td>C Distribution</td><td>191</td><td>87</td><td>104</td><td>45.5</td><td>54.4</td></tr><tr><td>D Distribution</td><td>290</td><td>127</td><td>163</td><td>43.7</td><td>56.2</td></tr></table> Water Treatment Operators Exams Pass/Fail Rates (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025) <table><tr><th>License Class</th><th>Total Examinees</th><th>Passed</th><th>Failed</th><th>Percent Passed</th><th>Percent Failed</th></tr><tr><td>A Treatment</td><td>132</td><td>52</td><td>80</td><td>39.3</td><td>60.6</td></tr><tr><td>B Treatment</td><td>141</td><td>61</td><td>80</td><td>43.2</td><td>56.7</td></tr><tr><td>C Treatment</td><td>113</td><td>62</td><td>51</td><td>54.8</td><td>45.1</td></tr><tr><td>D Treatment</td><td>121</td><td>71</td><td>50</td><td>58.6</td><td>41.3</td></tr><tr><td>E Treatment</td><td>170</td><td>110</td><td>60</td><td>64.7</td><td>35.2</td></tr></table>	License Class	Total Examinees	Passed	Failed	Percent Passed	Percent Failed	A Distribution	92	39	53	42.3	57.6	B Distribution	121	58	63	47.9	52.0	C Distribution	191	87	104	45.5	54.4	D Distribution	290	127	163	43.7	56.2	License Class	Total Examinees	Passed	Failed	Percent Passed	Percent Failed	A Treatment	132	52	80	39.3	60.6	B Treatment	141	61	80	43.2	56.7	C Treatment	113	62	51	54.8	45.1	D Treatment	121	71	50	58.6	41.3	E Treatment	170	110	60	64.7	35.2	
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b) Have a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED). States may allow experience and/or relevant training to be substituted for a high school diploma or GED. Education, training, or experience that is used to meet this	Reaffirm all operators have high school diploma or GED or equivalent experience. <u>This is written into each of the classification requirements for lowest graded licensure level.</u>																																																																			

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
requirement for any class of certification may not be used to meet the experience requirement.		
c) Have the defined minimum amount of on-the-job experience for each appropriate level of certification. The amount of experience required increases with each classification level. Post high school education may be substituted for experience. Credit may be given for experience in a related field (e.g., wastewater). Experience that is used to meet the experience requirement for any class of certification may not be used to meet the education requirement.	Reaffirm that the program has a defined minimum amount of on-the-job experience for each appropriate level of certification. <u>This is written into each of the classification requirements for lowest graded licensure level. All operators must have one year of actual work experience prior to being upgrade from a Trainee License</u>	
d) Grandparenting EPA recognizes that there are many competent small system operators that may not meet the initial requirements to become certified. EPA believes that states may need a transition period to allow these operators to continue to operate the system through “grandparenting”. It is recommended that grandparenting determinations be based on factors such as system compliance history, operator experience and knowledge, system complexity, and lack of treatment. If states choose to include a grandparenting provision in their programs, they must include specific requirements.	Provide an affirmation of previously approved grandparenting practice and current numbers. <u>The Environmental Certification Board has a grandfather program for distribution system operators. This program was intended to prevent experienced operators from losing their jobs for those that had a lot of knowledge about a specific distribution system. While the enrollment period has ended (more than 11 years ago), there are still grandfathered operators working for water systems in South Carolina.</u> <u>Current # of Grandfathered Water Distribution Operator: 49</u>	
<u>4. Enforcement</u>	Description of how state OpCert program is following up with systems lacking a properly certified operator (e.g., notices of violation, compliance	

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The state agency with primary enforcement responsibility for the Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) Program must have regulations that meet the requirements of these guidelines and require community water systems and nontransient noncommunity water systems to comply with state operator certification requirements. In nonprimacy states, the Governor must determine which state Agency will have this responsibility. States must have appropriate enforcement capabilities. States must have the ability to revoke operator certifications. States must also have the ability to suspend operator certifications or take other appropriate enforcement action for operator misconduct.	assistance, how state is tracking/finding out about lack of operator and how long the system is without operator), including (as applicable): ○ Number of systems which had some type enforcement action taken to bring system into compliance with state OpCert regulations. ○ Number of contacts/notices to system owners who have not designated an operator in responsible charge. ○ Number of letters sent to systems/operators which do not have an operator in responsible charge holding a valid certification at their system. ● Number of licenses revoked in the state in current year. ● Total number of licenses in the process of revocation at the end of the reporting period. ● Number of licenses suspended in the state in current year. ● Total number of licenses in the process of suspension at the end of the reporting period. <u>A complaint against a licensee, or an unlicensed person practicing a profession or occupation that requires a license, may be made via an online complaint system or by phone. The complaining party is responsible for ensuring that all necessary information is included on the form.</u> <u>Upon receipt of the complaint and jurisdiction is established, a thorough investigation is conducted to determine whether a violation has occurred. If a violation of the practice act is found, the respondent may be offered a consent agreement, or a hearing may be held before the appropriate Board or Commission to resolve the findings of the agency's investigation. Although this action is between the State and the Respondent, the complainant should be prepared to testify, as requested, at a hearing before the Board or Commission if the matter has not been otherwise resolved. The complaint will be dismissed by the Board or Commission if a violation is not found or the case does not present evidence that would sustain a legal procedure.</u>	

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	<u>The Office of Investigations and Enforcement currently has:</u> <u>Nine (9) cases currently pending.</u> <u>The Office of Disciplinary Counsel currently has:</u> <u>Three (3) cases currently pending</u> <u>Systems without a certified operator: none</u> <u>Systems with a temporary operator: none</u> <u>Operator grade and licensure status is tracked through the sanitary survey process.</u>	
<u>5. Certification Renewal</u> a) The state must establish training requirements for renewal based on the level of certification held by the operator.	• Number of operators renewing in each classification. • Affirmation that operators get the necessary training to cover all the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the license classification for which an operator is certified. <u>During every two-year period beginning July 1st of odd numbered years, you must obtain twelve (12) hours of continuing education in the area of your license category. Example: Two year period requiring twelve (12) hours begins July 1, 2023 and ends June 30, 2025.</u>	
b) States must require all operators including grandparented operators to acquire necessary amounts and types of state approved training. States may determine other requirements as deemed necessary.	• Number of training courses approved. • Number of operators required to take additional training as deemed necessary by the state. <u>The Board does not pre-approve Continuing Education. The Board uses criteria established by the Association of Boards of Certification's Continuing Education Course Topic Criteria.</u>	
c) States must have a fixed cycle of renewal not to exceed three years.	• Simple statement of renewal cycle, unless it changes, which should include a more descriptive narrative (under Antibacksliding and Baseline Standard 1, above).	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>All licenses must be renewed annually.</u>	
d) The state must require an individual to recertify if the individual fails to renew or qualify for renewal within two years of the date that the certificate expired.	Number of operators renewing after failing to renew or qualify for renewal within the state-specified time period, but no more than two years. <u>Renewal fees must be paid on or before June 30th of the current year. If the fee is not paid by June 30th, the license expires. A licensee who allows his/her license to lapse by failing to renew may be reinstated upon payment of a penalty fee (\$200) and the renewal fee (\$30) and for well drillers a penalty fee of (\$200) and the renewal fee (\$50), provided application for renewal is filed within 365 days of the expiration date of the license.</u>	
e) States must pay special attention to identify specific renewal requirements for grandparented operators to ensure that they possess the knowledge, skills, ability and judgement to properly operate the system. This must be done by one or more of the following approaches or by an alternative approach approved by EPA.	Number of grandparented operators where renewal training was specified. <u>Grandfathered licenses adhere to same Continuing Education requirement in place for all licensees.</u>	
f) States may specify renewal requirements for grandparented operators on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration factors such as a system's compliance history and operator experience and knowledge. For systems that have a history of being out of compliance, any certification renewal decision should consider whether noncompliance is the result of actions or inactions by the system's owner or the system's operator.	Number of grandparented operators where renewal cycle training was specified for the operator and reason. <u>Grandfathered licenses adhere to same Continuing Education requirement in place for all licensees.</u>	
g) States may require specific training requirements for certification renewal at	N/A First renewal cycle past.	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
the first renewal cycle for grandparented operators. This training should include all of the information covered by the initial certification exam for the system classification level for which the operator was grandparented even though an initial certification exam may not be required for certification renewal.	<u>Grandfathered licenses adhere to same Continuing Education requirement in place for all licensees.</u>	
h) States may require operators with grandparented certificates to meet all of the initial certification requirements for the classification level for which the operator was grandparented, and thereby obtain certification within a reasonable time period specified by the state.	• Number of grandparented operators with active licenses. <u>49</u>	
<u>6. Resources Needed to Implement the Program</u> States must provide sufficient resources to adequately fund and sustain the operator certification program (components include, but are not limited to: staff, data management, testing, enforcement, administration, and training approval). EPA recommends that states establish a dedicated fund that is self-sufficient.	• An affirmative statement that state meets Baseline Standard 6. • While the Initial Submittal may show the funding resource, additional information needs to be included if a primacy fee has been added or if Public Water System Supervision or DWSRF set-asides have been added, increased, or decreased. • A discussion of the staff describing increases or decreases in FTEs. Provide comparison to staff resources reported in the Initial Submittal (or the previous year). • A brief discussion on how resources are dedicated toward the data management, testing, enforcement, administration, and training approval. • Other. If there is an additional type of resource not listed, describe and relate to the program. <u>The Environmental Certification Board is adequately funded through fees taken for initial applications, reciprocity applications, renewals and licensee list requests. The ECB is under the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations.</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
<u>7. Recertification</u> The states must have a process for recertification of individuals whose certification has expired for a period exceeding two years. This process must include: review of the individual's experience and training, and reexamination. An individual is not certified with an expired certificate. The state may develop more stringent requirements for recertification for individuals whose certificates have expired, been revoked, or been suspended.	• A simple summary of the recertification process in the state <u>An operator wishing to recertify must submit a completed application and pass the exam at their previously held license level.</u>	
<u>8. Stakeholder Involvement</u> Stakeholder involvement is important to the public health objectives of the program. It helps to ensure the relevancy and validity of the program, and the confidence of all interested parties. States must include ongoing stakeholder involvement in the revision and operations of state operator certification programs. Public comment on rule revisions is not adequate stakeholder involvement. A stakeholder board or advisory committee is strongly recommended.	• An affirmative statement that state meets Baseline Standard 8. • Documentation of meetings with stakeholders, e.g., date, purpose, stakeholders involved, summary of revisions and operations of the state OpCert programs discussed, and feedback provided <u>The South Carolina Environmental Certification Board is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor. Of the nine members, one must be a licensed public water treatment operator and one must be a licensed public water distribution system operator; two must be licensed wastewater operators, one of whom must be certified in the physical chemical specialty; one must be a licensed well driller; one must be a member of the public at large; one must be a representative from the Land, Water, and Conservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources; one must be a member of the Department of Health and Environmental Control, designated by the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Environmental Control; and one must be a representative from a technical education or other higher education institution actively involved in operator training. The Water Environment Association of South Carolina may recommend two licensed public wastewater treatment operators, one of whom must be certified in biological specialty and one of whom must be certified in the physical</u>	

Operator Certification Guidelines (Public Health Objective + Antibacksliding + 9 Baseline Standards)	EPA national criteria to evaluate annual reports with respect to requirement to show <u>documentation</u> and <u>evaluation of ongoing program implementation</u>	Notes
	<u>chemical specialty; the South Carolina Section of the American Water Works Association may recommend one licensed public water treatment operator; the South Carolina Ground Water Association may recommend a licensed well driller; and the South Carolina Rural Water Association may recommend one licensed public water distribution system operator. Any individual, group, or association may nominate qualified individuals to the Governor for his consideration.</u>	
<u>9. Program Review</u> States must perform reviews of their operator certification programs. EPA recommends that states perform periodic internal reviews and occasional external/peer reviews. Examples of items to review include: regulations, exam items for relevancy and validity, compliance, enforcement, budget and staffing, training relevancy, training needs through examination performance, and data management system.	• Documentation of internal and external meetings which focus on program implementation which could change as a result of the meeting- e.g., include date of the meeting, an identifier as internal or external, programs or stakeholders involved, purpose of the meeting, results of the meeting(s) or a copy of the program review report. One of the requirements of the EPA’s Public Water Supervision System grant program to States is that each state must have a program for certifying environmental systems operators. As a grant recipient, SCDES is responsible for sending routine reports to the EPA on the status of the program and any updates as needed. In South Carolina, environmental systems operators are certified through SC Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (LLR). The EPA also requires that the operator certification programs have an internal audit every three years and an external audit every five years. <u>A specific program review did not occur in the 2025 calendar year. The most recent auditing action was a full review of the processes, statutes, and regulations conducted by the South Carolina Environmental Certification Board between July 2022 and May 2024.</u>	