



**Walter Wright, Jr.**  
wwright@mwlaw.com  
(501) 688.8839

# Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs: American Water Works Association Revised Policy Statement

## Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog

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The American Water Works Association ("AWWA") announced consideration of a revised Policy Statement on Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs ("Policy Statement").

AWWA describes itself as the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water.

The AWWA has had in place a policy statement on Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs since 1971.

The recently announced version notes that the organization supports the principle that:

...water of the highest quality should be used as the source of supply for public water systems.

Accordingly, the risks and potential mitigation requirements of any recreational activity on water supply reservoirs should be identified and publicly evaluated. In the evaluation, utility-, customer- and other stakeholder-determined acceptable levels of risk should be given the highest consideration. No recreation should be permitted on finished-water reservoirs under any circumstances.

The Policy Statement further states that protection of public health/drinking water quality should be the highest priority in operational decisions for reservoirs used jointly for water supply and recreation.

Further, it states that water utility decisions on permitting recreational uses of water supply reservoirs should consider the following issues:

- the potential for water quality degradation
- the public health risk
- the acceptance of such health risk by the customers
- the current required level of treatment
- additional treatment requirements, uncertainties, and costs that may be incurred

As a result, it argues that recreational uses should be prohibited in those instances where a scientifically-based risk assessment, or, in the absence of a risk assessment, the best available scientific data demonstrates a probable or imminent degradation of water quality or hazard to public health that cannot be controlled or mitigated in a cost effective manner.

A process for considering proposals for recreational use of such reservoirs is described along with development of an integrated reservoir management plan. The scenario where recreation already exists on a reservoir is also considered.

AWWA states that this Policy Statement has been approved by its Technical and Educational Council and will subsequently be reviewed by the organization's staff. It will then be forwarded to the organization's Executive Committee and, if approved, forwarded to the Board of Directors for final action.

[A copy of the Policy Statement can be downloaded here.](#)