Message

**From:** Jones, Enesta [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=65B8E6C6E5CA4A7A9AE85D98A4C8EEDB-EJONES02]
**Sent:** 7/21/2017 6:02:26 PM
**To:** Jordan Houston Ex. 6
**CC:** Press [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=b293283291dc44e0b5d1c36be9281d8a-Press]
**Subject:** Re: Interview request

Hi Jordan,

We are still working on the first part of your inquiry.

Below are the responses to Jasmine's questions. All attributable to an EPA spokesperson, please.

Implementing environmental statutes is central to EPAs mission to protect human health and the environment. There are approximately 30 environmental statutes with a wide and diverse array of monitoring, management, and reporting requirements that provide the framework for EPA's operations. Each statute is tailored to address a very specific set of environmental challenges (drinking water, waste water, toxic releases) and the sources, frequency, and types of information needed to manage the requirements of the statute are often quite different. As a result, there are many EPA information management systems that support the numerous and different requirements generated by each of these statutes enacted over the 47- year history of the Agency. For example:

- The **Safe Drinking Water Act** requires states to report drinking water information periodically to EPA. This information is maintained in a federal database, the SDWIS Fed Data Warehouse. EPA provides this data to the public through the SDWIS Fed Reporting System.

- Section 313 of the **Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA)**established the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) reporting requirements for industry. The **Pollution Prevention Act (PPA)** requires that facilities report additional data on waste management and source reduction activities to TRI. The TRI Processing System (TRIPS) contains the data on toxic chemical releases and other waste management practices, and pollution prevention activities reported annually by certain covered industry groups as well as federal facilities to EPA's TRI program.

- **The Clean Water Act (CWA)** creates the framework for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters Under the CWA. It is unlawful to discharge pollutants point sources into navigable waters, unless an industry or federal facility obtains a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Discharge Permit. Information on NDPES permits is held in the Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS)-NPDES database.

The Agency uses several approaches to facilitate access to these multiple information management systems. For example, the EnviroFacts Data Warehouse contains data from information systems across EPA. There are numerous customized searches that allow data be accessed in ways that meet user needs. The Agency is expanding its E-Enterprise Portal with a goal of providing an easier way for co-regulators, stakeholders, and the public to access environmental information tailored to their interests through user profiles.

The ECHO system is the best way to understand the scope of NPDES permit violations.

https://cfpub.epa.gov/dmr/ (from the intro page: The tool uses discharge monitoring report (DMR) data from ICIS-NPDES to calculate pollutant discharge amounts. EPA has verified the accuracy of the tool's calculations. EPA has also performed a limited review of the underlying data that has focused on facilities with the largest amounts of pollutant discharges.)

**Enesta Jones**
U.S. EPA
Office of Media Relations
Office: 202.564.7873
Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jul 20, 2017, at 12:13 PM, Jordan Houston < Ex. 6 wrote:

Enesta,

We are primarily interested in whether the return to compliance date for every violation is accurate. We ask because we've seen a cluster of violations that took more than 30 years to return to compliance based off the SDWIS database and wanted to make sure that was accurate. I'm attaching a spreadsheet with examples of this.

We'd also like to explain our process from the previous email in more detail. I'm copying our lead data reporter, Agnel Philip, on this.

Additionally, we know that you've been communicating with our colleague Jasmine Spearing-Bowen and wanted to pass along some requests of theirs too regarding data the EPA collects. If it's easier for you, we can send all our requests through one person going forward.

- Why are there so many different monitoring systems (TRI, NPDES, SDWIS)
- Is the ECHO system the best way to understand the scope of NPDES permit violations?
- Can we walk through an NPDES permit entry to better understand the information for each one?
- Is there a database that pulls all chemical discharge and violation data, rather than having to look at each permit individually?

Thanks,

Jordan

On Tue, Jul 18, 2017 at 12:09 PM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:

> Jordan,
>
> I can see if that is possible. Do you have specific questions about the data? That would be helpful.
>
> **Enesta Jones**
> U.S. EPA
> Office of Media Relations
> Office: 202.564.7873
> Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jul 18, 2017, at 3:05 PM, Jordan Houston <Ex. 6> wrote:

Hi Enesta,

Could we have a background conversation with someone who could help walk us through this? We're fairly confident on the methodology but less sure about whether the data we're using is complete.

Thanks,
Jordan

On Fri, Jul 14, 2017 at 6:21 AM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:
Jordan,

EPA has limited data regarding how you ran the data query and therefore we are unable to replicate your queries. When computing time to return to compliance, you should consider looking at violation by violation instead of contaminant by contaminant because this would apply the enforcement action to the violation.

**Enesta Jones**
U.S. EPA
Office of Media Relations
Office: 202.564.7873
Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jul 14, 2017, at 8:21 AM, Jordan Houston Ex. 6 wrote:

No problem. Thanks for the update.

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 2:30 PM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:
Hi Jordan,

I'll need until Monday to get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

**Enesta Jones**
U.S. EPA
Office of Media Relations
Office: 202.564.7873
Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jul 10, 2017, at 7:27 PM, Jordan Houston Ex. 6 wrote:

Hi Enesta,

Thanks for your response. We have a couple questions regarding the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) database that we've been working with.

Using the SDWIS data, we calculated the total number of people served by community systems with violations that were either in a "Known" or "Open" compliance status. The total number based off of the last quarter was 103 million people for non-native and non-territorial systems. Does this reflect the true number of systems that are out of compliance with drinking water standards?

We are also trying to figure out how long it takes systems to return to compliance with EPA standards. Using the SDWIS data, we found the date when systems returned to compliance for specific contaminants and then found the earliest compliance start date for that contaminant to determine when the contamination issues began. The average for non-native and non-territorial systems was about 2.5 years. Does the EPA believe that those data points in SDWIS are accurate for all violations and that the average stated above is accurate?

If we could get these answers by the end of the week, that'd be great. Thanks again.

Jordan

On Thu, Jun 22, 2017 at 1:37 PM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:

Hi Jordan,

Please attribute our response below to an agency spokesperson:

Protecting children from exposure to lead is one of EPA's highest priorities. EPA has conducted extensive engagement with stakeholder groups and the public to inform potential revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). We continue to work on the revisions to the LCR. As a part of EPA's ongoing effort to understand and assess lead exposure, the agency initiated a peer review of draft scientific modeling approaches to inform EPA's evaluation of potential health-based benchmarks for lead in drinking water. Next, EPA will be holding the peer review meeting for the draft scientific modeling approaches to inform EPA's evaluation of potential health-based benchmarks for lead in drinking water. The meeting will be held on June 27 and 28, 2017 in Washington DC. More information: https://www.epa.gov/dwstandardsregulations/lead-and-copper-rule-long-term-revisions

Primacy agencies are required to report drinking water data quarterly to the EPA. This data is maintained in the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) Federal Version (Fed). The process of reporting data to EPA does allow for potential SDWIS data quality issues, and EPA takes a number of steps to improve data quality. The EPA engages in regular oversight of primacy agencies, both during annual Public Water System (PWS) Supervision reviews and in-depth periodic program reviews. When a primacy agency prepares a file for submittal to EPA they use a tool called SDWIS FedRep that checks the file for errors and data quality issues. Primacy agencies use this information to correct the file before sending to the EPA. When the file is submitted, EPA runs a similar tool to check the file for errors and data quality issues. EPA Regions work with their primacy agencies to fix the issues with the data submitted. EPA has also developed a SDWIS Data Quality Report that identifies missing data or other data

quality issues and provides this information in a user friendly tool for the primacy agencies to use to improve their data.

To help the primacy agencies manage compliance monitoring data, EPA released the Compliance Monitoring Data Portal in September 2016. The portal enables PWSs and laboratories to report drinking water data electronically to primacy agencies. This system is leading to fewer reporting errors, improved data quality, and reduced time needed to report state data to the EPA. In addition, EPA began updating SDWIS State through its development of SDWIS Prime, which will allow electronic compliance determination and incorporate data quality functions. The EPA anticipates launching SDWIS Prime in March 2018. The EPA anticipates both new data systems will improve data completeness and accuracy of drinking water data reported to the EPA. Go to: https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/safe-drinking-water-information-system-sdwis-federal-reporting

All systems face unique issues or challenges in consistently providing drinking water that meets safe drinking water standards and requirements. Local officials, regional offices, and consumers play an important role in helping water systems meet regulatory requirements and protect public health. Besides protecting public health, communities that support their water systems are making long-term investments in sustainable communities and economic well-being. EPA works closely with states and our federal and tribal partners to assist small systems with financial and technical resources to sustainably provide safe drinking water. To learn more, go to: https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity

The Safe Drinking Water Act directed the Agency to develop information on operator certification requirements. EPA works in partnership with states, water systems, and the public to provide guidance and support. Implementation for operator certification programs happen through the states and their respective operator certification programs – of which specific requirements may vary from state to state. The Agency's and program's goal is the treatment and distribution of safe drinking water to communities. For more information: https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/information-states-about-certifying-operators-drinking-water-systems

EPA works to identify traits and characteristics that are frequently present at public water systems with persistent noncompliance, which are sometimes called "intractable water systems," and works to determine—usually at one of our regional offices—how our resources can be used most effectively to return systems to compliance.

**Enesta Jones**

U.S. EPA

Office of Media Relations

Office: 202.564.7873

**Ex. 6**

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

**From:** Jordan Houston Ex. 6
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 13, 2017 6:03 PM
**To:** Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
**Subject:** Re: Interview request

Here are some of the questions we want to ask:

1. Is the EPA still in the process of revising the Lead and Copper Rule, and is there a target date for unveiling those revisions?

2. What steps has the EPA taken to ensure its SDWIS data is complete and accurate?

3. What are intractable water systems, and how does the EPA address/manage them?

4. How does the EPA ensure that all systems can comply with regulations, especially small systems that face unique funding problems?

5. How does the EPA keep track of operator licenses?

The firm deadline would be sometime before next Friday, June 23. Also, you likely heard from a colleague of mine, Bryan Anderson, I just wanted to let you know that we are working on this project together.

Thank you so much for your time.

Jordan

On Tue, Jun 13, 2017 at 9:38 AM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:

> Thanks!
>
> **Enesta Jones**
>
> **U.S. EPA**

**Office of Media Relations**

**Office: 202.564.7873**

Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jun 13, 2017, at 12:38 PM, Jordan Houst Ex. 6 wrote:

Enesta,

Ok sounds good, we can get those in to you by this afternoon. Thank you!

Jordan

On Tue, Jun 13, 2017 at 9:35 AM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:

> Hi Jordan,
>
> Please send me your specific follow-up questions and firm deadline.
>
> **Enesta Jones**
>
> **U.S. EPA**
>
> **Office of Media Relations**

**Office:** 202.564.7873

Ex. 6

**"The root of all joy is gratefulness."**

On Jun 13, 2017, at 12:34 PM, Jordan Houston <Ex. 6 wrote:

Hi Enesta,

Thank you for the links. We've read over these, as well as the PDF version of the regulations handbook. We still have a few specific questions regarding these topics. If we could speak with someone from the Office of Water, we would greatly appreciate it.

We have to start writing our story by the beginning of July. Would it be possible to schedule an interview sometime before then?

Please let me know! Thanks again.

Jordan

On Tue, Jun 13, 2017 at 8:18 AM, Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov> wrote:

> Hi Jordan,
>
> Please attribute our response below to an agency spokesperson:

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requires EPA to establish and enforce standards that public drinking water systems must follow. EPA delegates primary enforcement responsibility (also called primacy) for public water systems to states and Indian Tribes if they meet certain requirements. It is a partnership that involves EPA, the states, tribes, water systems, and water system operators. The public drinking water systems regulated by EPA and delegated states and tribes provide drinking water to 90 percent of Americans. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) gives individual states the opportunity to set and enforce their own drinking water standards if the standards are at a minimum as stringent as EPA's national standards.

EPA delegates primary enforcement responsibility (also called primacy) for public water systems to states and Indian Tribes if they meet certain requirements. More information can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/primacy-enforcement-responsibility-public-water-systems

Under section 1443(a) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), EPA provides assistance to states, territories, and tribes in carrying out their Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) programs. A PWS is a system for the provision to the public of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year. More information and guidance can be found on the public water system program at: https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/information-about-public-water-systems

EPA sets legal limits on more than 90 contaminants in drinking water. The legal limit for a contaminant reflects the level that protects human health and that water systems can achieve using the best available technology. EPA rules also set water-testing schedules and methods that water systems must follow. More information on regulations and contaminant information can be found here: https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/drinking-water-regulatory-information

In 1991, EPA published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. This regulation is known as the Lead and Copper Rule (also referred to as the LCR). Since 1991 the LCR has undergone various revisions. More information on Lead and Copper can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule and https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule#compliance

**From:** Jordan Houston Ex. 6
**Sent:** Thursday, June 08, 2017 1:04 PM
**To:** Press <Press@epa.gov>
**Cc:** Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
**Subject:** Interview request

Hi,

My name is Jordan Houston and I'm a reporter for News21, an investigative team based in Phoenix. I spoke with Enesta over the phone last week about possibly interviewing someone in the Office of Water. She was going on vacation so she suggested I email this address.

My team and I are doing a project on drinking water quality in the US, and are looking to talk to someone from the administration about the management and regulations of some of the drinking water standards enforced by the EPA. To be more specific, we are trying to better understand how enforcement and funding operate, some of the more complex contaminant regulations (like the Lead and Copper Rule), operator certifications, and if there are any regulations that are currently under review.

If there is someone that could answer these questions for us and is willing to speak, could you please put us into contact with them? We would greatly appreciate it.

Thank you for your time.

Jordan

<EPA_SDWIS_compliance_30_years.xlsx>