

additional samples over a period of one year, unless any one quarterly sample would cause the running annual average to exceed the MCL. Then the system is out of compliance immediately.

D. What Comments Did EPA Receive on the Total Coliform Rule?

Several commenters addressed the TCR. Several commenters raised several issues relating to monitoring. Some contended that routine monitoring should be focused on critical locations in the distribution system, rather than on the current requirement to monitor all parts of the distribution system. They also urged EPA to allow the use of dedicated sampling taps. Some commenters argued for allowing a finished water storage reservoir as a routine monitoring site. Two commenters urged EPA to focus on *E. coli* as the measure of water quality in the distribution system, rather than on total coliforms. In addition to routine monitoring, a few commenters addressed the topic of repeat samples after a total coliform-positive sample. One commenter, for example, urged EPA to eliminate the requirement to take upstream and downstream repeat samples after a total coliform-positive sample. Environmental groups urged EPA to strengthen the TCR and other rules that protect against pathogens, and exhorted EPA not to ease the TCR burden such that public health is compromised.

EPA Response: EPA's announcement in the April 17, 2002, **Federal Register** was only intended to discuss the Agency's intent to begin the process for revising the TCR. EPA will consider the commenters' suggestions as part of the revision process. As stated in the April 17, 2002, **Federal Register**, the Agency plans to consider revisions to the TCR with new requirements for ensuring the integrity of distribution systems. The Agency remains committed to obtaining input from stakeholders as part of the rule development process. EPA agrees with the comment that public health should not be compromised, and will consider only those revisions that will assure public health protection.

E. What Comments Did EPA Receive on Research Needs?

Commenters found that EPA's information on potential research resulting from the review of NPDWRs would be better represented by a summary of research needs that were identified by the Agency. Commenters felt that this summary is important to inform future regulatory decisions. Commenters also suggested additional research needs that had not been

identified by EPA in its preliminary review.

EPA Response: EPA agrees that the identification of research needs is an important component of the review of NPDWRs. Research findings may support future reviews and/or revisions to NPDWRs.

The Agency is considering research needs that it identified as part of the review as well as those suggested by commenters. EPA will continue to identify areas where data are lacking. Dialogue with industry and other groups, including those that sponsor or conduct research on priority areas, would be beneficial to the drinking water program. Collaboration in sponsoring studies can provide multiple benefits.

There are two research needs associated with the Six-Year Review that are being addressed through mechanisms external to EPA. The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences is conducting an assessment of recent data on fluoride health effects. In addition, the National Toxicology Program is conducting a study on chromium VI toxicity. Both of these research efforts are discussed in the April 17, 2002, **Federal Register** announcement of EPA's preliminary revise/not revise decisions. The current review identified several general and specific areas of potential research related to treatment. The treatment-related research areas are briefly discussed in the Treatment Feasibility Document (USEPA, 2003g).

EPA is currently in the process of examining whether specific research needs exist within each of the Six-Year Review areas of regulatory consideration (*i.e.*, health effects, analytical methods, treatment, implementation, and occurrence/exposure). Some of the research needs identified during the Six-Year Review effort will be discussed in the context of the Multi-Year Plan (MYP) for drinking water. The MYP describes the EPA Office of Research and Development's fiscal year 2003 to 2010 research program to support the regulatory development activities of the EPA Office of Water. EPA plans to make this document available to the public in 2003.

V. References

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