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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

NewsRelease

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AWWA Releases 2008 State of the Industry Report

Key Findings Include Concerns over Source Water Availability and Infrastructure Failures

(DENVER, CO) – Source water supply and protection emerged as the top area of concern among North American water professionals in the 2008 “State of the Industry Report,” published by the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

The report, now in its fifth year, represents an annual checkup for the water industry, with more than 1,800 leaders assessing the overall health of the industry and identifying key challenges. For the first time, source water supply and protection was the most frequently mentioned area of concern for both the short and long term. The full report was published in the October issue of *Journal AWWA*.

“The State of the Industry Report provides direct insights into how water professionals feel about issues today and in the future,” said AWWA Executive Director Gary Zimmerman. “Our analysis of this data guides the association’s programming decisions to help address the greatest concerns of our membership.”

Respondents expressed concerns about ensuring adequate future water resources, particularly in arid or semi-arid regions experiencing population growth. Many respondents stressed the need for effective water efficiency and conservation programs, with others indicating a growing interest in technologies such as water reuse and desalination.

Other top issues identified in the report include:

- **Infrastructure:** Described as “aging” by most respondents, but also “crumbling” or “failing” by others, the state of underground water infrastructure continues to concern water utilities. Respondents lamented that other pressing expenses cause utilities to defer infrastructure maintenance, leading to even steeper expenses in the future.
- **Regulatory Issues:** Many water professionals express concern about complying with new, complex regulations.
- **Workforce:** The effects of the retiring Baby Boomer generation are being felt in the water industry. Older workers are retiring, intellectual capital is walking out the door, and competition is fierce for the shrinking pool of new workers entering the marketplace.

- **Business Factors:** Financing infrastructure repair and improvements, source water development, regulatory requirements, security, and a host of other factors continues to be a challenge throughout the industry.

The report, which provides U.S. and Canadian breakouts, also includes a measure of overall industry soundness, or the respondents' assessment of the industry's overall health. In 2008, U.S. respondents rated the current soundness of the industry slightly higher than in 2007. However, for the first time, U.S. respondents rated the *future* soundness lower than its current soundness, indicating significant concerns about the years ahead. The future soundness ratings of the Canadian water industry dropped significantly in 2008, mirroring the U.S. decline in optimism.

"The report confirms a lot of things we know to be true, but also illuminates some blind spots," said AWWA President Mike Leonard. "As an organization, we will continue to provide water professionals with the resources they need to continue to supply their customers with safe drinking water."

Among survey respondents, 68% were water utility professionals, 24% represented industry manufacturers or service providers, and the remaining respondents came from academia, science, and regulatory bodies.

AWWA members may access the report online at awwa.org/publications.

Non-members may purchase the article through www.thewaterlibrary.com.

Media Note: Members of the media wishing to obtain a complimentary PDF should contact Bianca McCullough at bmccullough@awwa.org.

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AWWA is the authoritative resource for knowledge, information, and advocacy to improve the quality and supply of water in North America and beyond. AWWA is the largest organization of water professionals in the world. AWWA advances public health, safety and welfare by uniting the efforts of the full spectrum of the entire water community. Through our collective strength we become better stewards of water for the greatest good of the people and the environment.