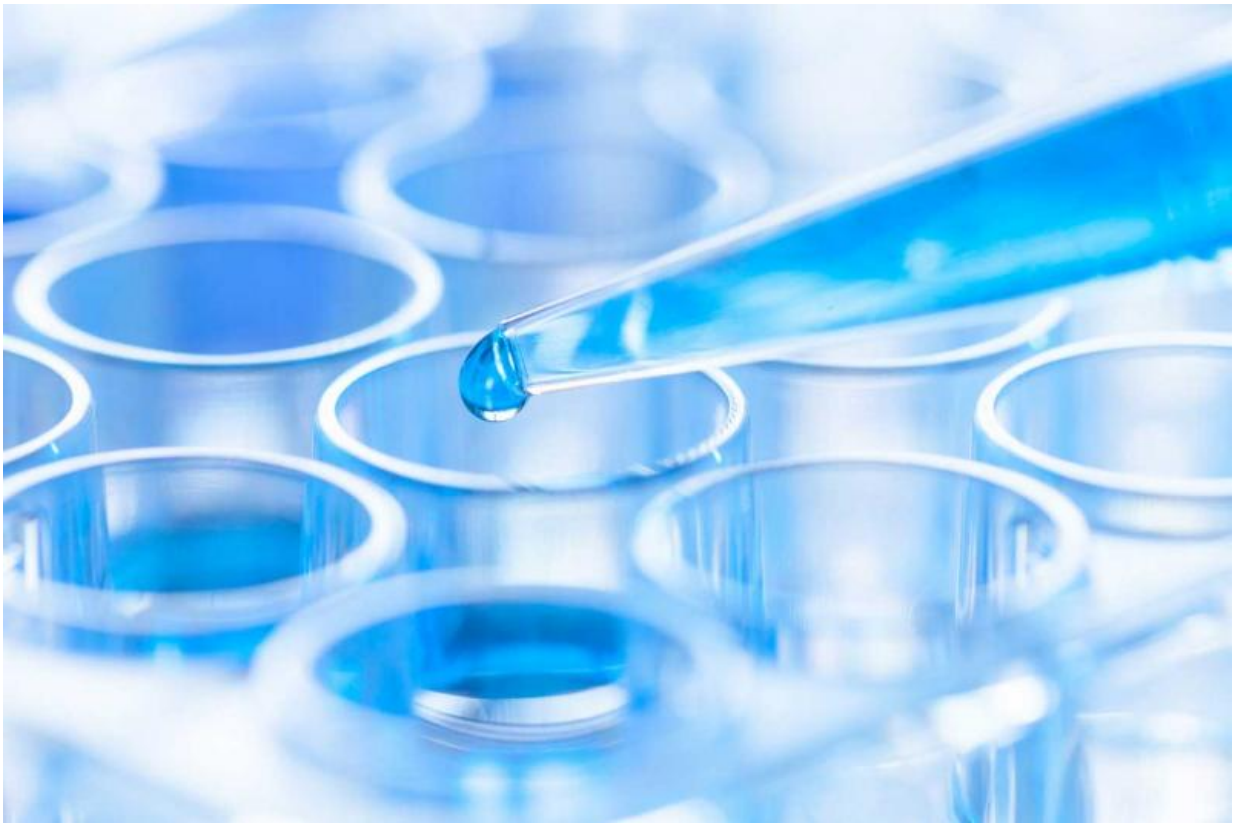


New report calls for increased monitoring of US drinking water supplies

January 4 2017, by Jim Erickson



Credit: University of Michigan

Monitoring of U.S. drinking water supplies for chemical and microbial contaminants should be increased, especially for vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, infants and young children, according to the

final report from a panel of scientists and engineers that advises President Obama.

In response to concerns about the safety of the nation's drinking water, underscored by the revelations about lead in tap water in Flint, Mich., the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology was asked last spring to investigate how science and technology could help ensure the safety of the nation's drinking water.

The panel, known as PCAST, issued its recommendations and the executive summary of its study Nov. 30. The [final report](#) was released Dec. 19.

The initial draft of the report was prepared by a working group co-chaired by PCAST member Rosina Bierbaum of the University of Michigan and Christine Cassel of the Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine.

"The release of this report could not come at a more important time. Last month Congress passed the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation Act, authorizing funding for Flint and other communities to respond to lead problems," said Bierbaum, a member of the faculty at U-M's School of Natural Resources and Environment and at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy.



Lake Havasu on the Colorado River is the secondary source of drinking water for Phoenix, Arizona, supplying about 40% of Phoenix's water supply. 50% comes from the watersheds of the Verde and Salt Rivers, according to the official website of the City of Phoenix Water Services Department. Los Angeles also obtains a significant percentage of its water supply from Lake Havasu. Credit: Wikimedia.org user Kjkolb

The report is titled "Science and Technology to Ensure the Safety of the Nation's Drinking Water" and contains both near-term and long-term recommendations.

The near-term recommendations include:

- Increased monitoring of drinking-water contaminants, especially for vulnerable populations. All women who enroll in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children would be referred to the appropriate agency for tap-

water testing for lead. In addition, PCAST recommends that the Environmental Protection Agency consider modifying the Lead and Copper Rule, as well as additional contaminant rules, to require follow-up testing when contaminant levels exceed a threshold level.

- Development of strategies for improved data sharing and accessibility. The Executive Office of the President should support the development of a Drinking Water Data Platform for collection, analysis, storage and sharing of geospatially linked drinking-water-system contamination data.
- Expanded use of citizen-science projects on drinking water. The federal government should develop and support research to enable efforts to expand measurement and monitoring of drinking-water supplies in the United States by actively funding citizen-science activities such as home water testing.
- Increased investment by the federal government in programs aimed at helping American workers get the skills and credentials needed to support the operation, maintenance and improvement of drinking-water systems across the country.

The panel states that while drinking water in the U.S. is safe and of high quality most of the time in most places, public confidence regarding drinking-water quality has been shaken recently by a series of high-visibility crises, including the one in Flint.

Those events highlight the long-term national challenges to maintaining high-quality [drinking water](#), resulting particularly from pollution of source waters and an aging infrastructure that is in need of significant repair and modernization, according to the panel.

More information: REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT: Science and Technology to Ensure the Safety of the Nation's Drinking Water: www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/eo/13643/20161219.pdf

Provided by University of Michigan

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