Water Reuse

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WEF recognizes that the world's water supply is a finite resource and the practice of water reuse is key to the conservation of this natural resource. Thus, WEF supports the use of reclaimed water for non-potable purposes as a means of conserving potable water supplies. Also, WEF supports the consideration and use of highly treated reclaimed water for indirect potable reuse and encourages public involvement in all aspects of water reuse projects. The reuse of municipal wastewater for beneficial purposes is an important element of the world's total water resources management. The use of reclaimed water for domestic, industrial, commercial, agricultural, environmental, and other purposes can conserve and extend freshwater supplies.

Indirect potable reuse is the introduction of highly treated reclaimed water to a surface water or groundwater system that ultimately is used as a potable water supply. Current engineering practice can provide treatment systems that are capable of reliably eliminating pathogens and reducing organic and inorganic contaminant concentrations to very low levels in reclaimed water. Therefore, local authorities should consider indirect potable reuse of reclaimed water as part of an integrated water resources management strategy. The viability of reclaimed water for indirect potable reuse should be assessed with regard to quantity and reliability of raw water supplies, the quality of reclaimed water, and cost effectiveness. These management criteria should always be used in decision making related to the use of highly treated reclaimed water for indirect potable reuse.

Owners and operators of wastewater treatment systems producing reclaimed water for beneficial applications are urged to adopt the attitude that they are performing resource recovery rather than wastewater disposal and that their operations have public health significance. WEF also urges owners and operators of wastewater treatment systems and reclaimed water use areas to provide public education programs and involve the public in the planning, development, and operation of water reuse projects.