

Water Quality Programs Essential Designation: Initial COVID-19 Response Survey Summary

Survey Period: March 26-April 10, 2020

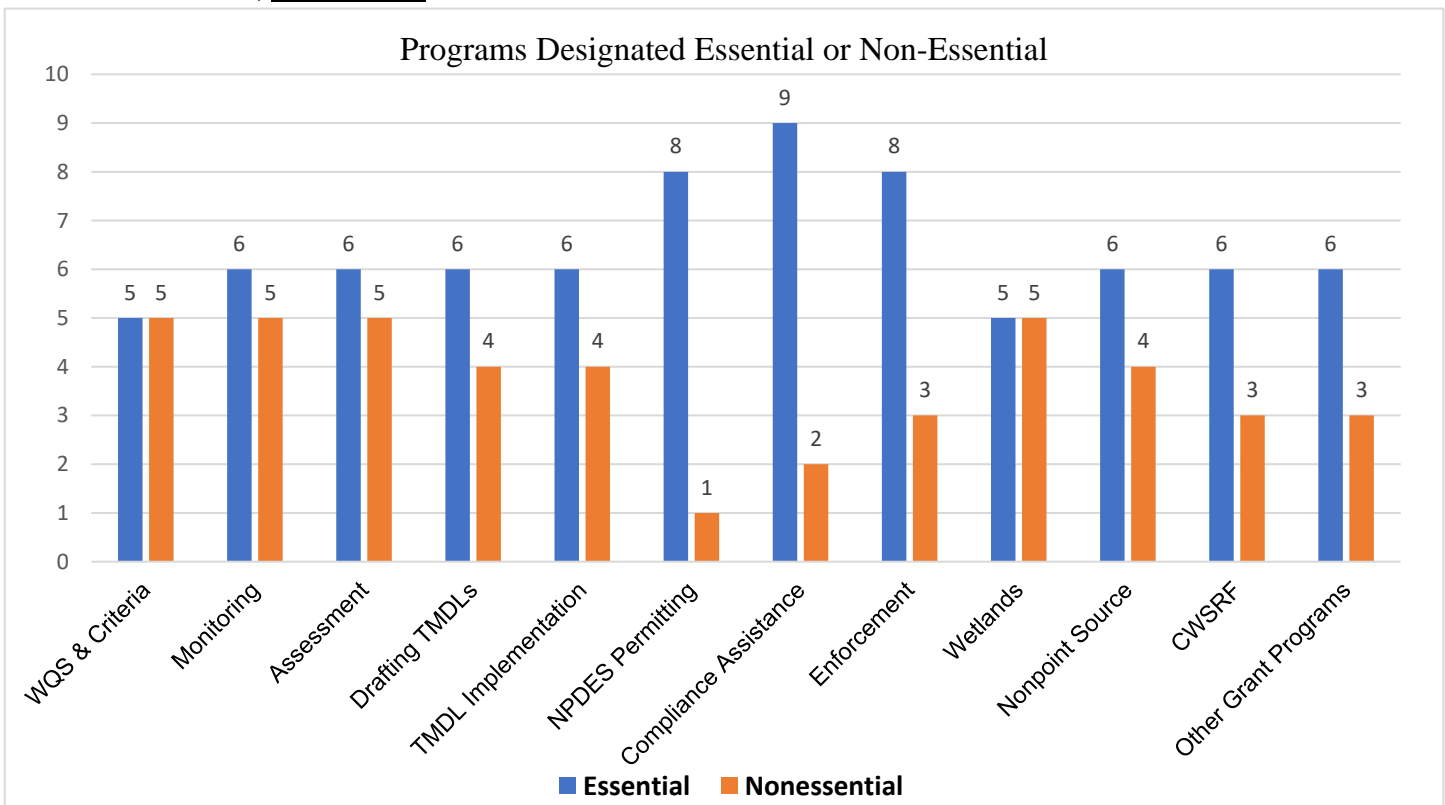
26 States Responded to this Survey.

1. Has your state designated your entire clean water programs as “essential” or “non-essential”?

Of states that responded,

- Essential: 59%
- Nonessential: 9%
- No Designation Yet: 32%

2. Please identify how your clean water programs have been delineated as essential or non-essential, if applicable. See chart below.



3. If no designation has been made, does your state plan/anticipate doing so in the near future?

Of states that responded,

- Yes: 22%
- No: 11%
- Unsure: 66%

The following Summary of Personnel Impacts is based on narrative observations provided by states/interstates that completed this survey.

- An unknown, but significant, number of states could not indicate how their Clean Water programs were designated because designation in their state is not according to program, but according to some other organizing framework, such as:
 - All state staff automatically “essential” during a state disaster declaration or other pre-planned protocols (i.e. COOP) that are now engaged. At present, every state in the US is under a state disaster (or similar) declaration.
 - All state staff teleworking unless requested or granted permission to conduct work in the field or duty station with director approval on case-by-case or prescriptive (i.e. responding to a regulated facility emergency) basis.
 - State declared certain sectors (i.e. utilities) and their regulators as essential.
 - Required to maintain legal (i.e. CWA), but not voluntary, program obligations.
- Telework is nearly entirely implemented. In at least one state, half of staff telework while half report to their duty station, rotating biweekly.
- Work involving human interaction such as inspections and ambient monitoring is either halted (typically in “stay at home order” scenarios) or limited while requiring social distancing/other protocols.
- Several states did not have cloud computing and telework-friendly systems in place upon telework orders being implemented. At least one state did not have a telework policy for staff on the books.
- In some instances, state staff in rural areas do not have internet at their homes.
- An unknown number of states have indefinitely paused field activities while an unknown number have implemented a “temporary” pause.
- Ambient monitoring is reduced because of both stay at home orders as well as resources and personnel reassigned to COVID-19 response functions. A common example among respondents: a state COOP/disaster designation requires staff to work on “mission-critical priority work” only, therefore resulting in staff completing “non-critical” work to be reassigned.