



Partnering Over Time

Vinton County Water joins Jackson County Water



This presentation was originally presented in 2012 as part of a four-part webinar series to promote system partnerships. The webinars were provided by the U.S. EPA and U.S. Department of Agriculture to jointly promote sustainable rural water and wastewater systems.



Presenters

- **Larry Foster**, Jackson County Water Company
- **Jim Holtz**, Former VP, Vinton County Water Company;
Board Member, Jackson County Water Company
- **David Douglas**, USDA RD
- **Sarah Wallace**, Ohio EPA
- **John Rauch**, Great Lakes RCAP
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Presentation Topics:

- What are water system partnerships?
- The partnership between Jackson County Water and Vinton County Water
 - How did the partnership change over time?
 - Who are the players, what are their roles and responsibilities?
 - What are the lessons learned?



What are Water System Partnerships?

A **tool** for building technical, managerial and financial capacity.



What are Water System Partnerships?

- Do you know a system that faces any of these challenges?
 - Technical
 - Inadequate or aging infrastructure
 - Limited/poor source quality/quantity
 - Lack certified operator
 - Financial
 - Diseconomies of scale (few households = high costs)
 - History of water rates that are too low
 - Limited knowledge of financing options
 - Managerial
 - Limited part time management attention
 - Lack of expertise in long-term water system planning or operations

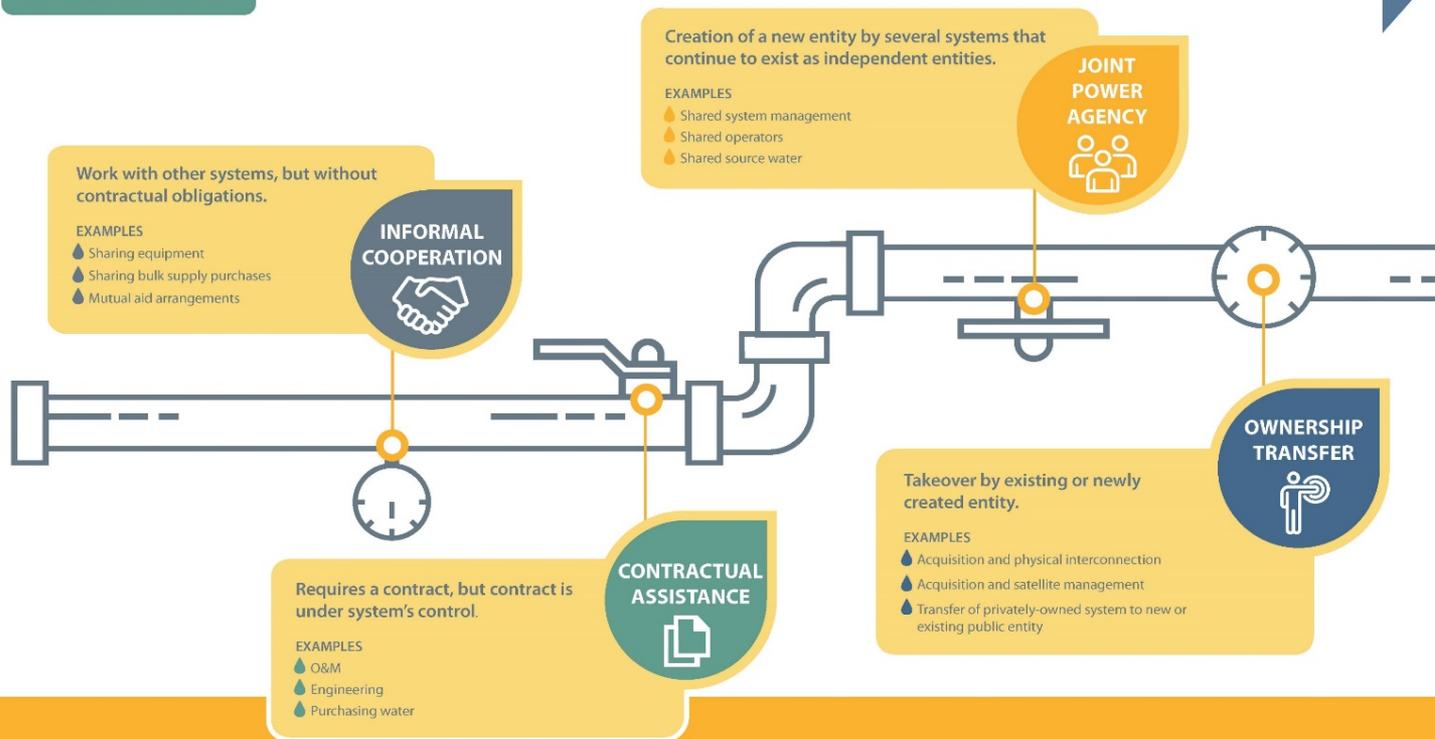


Different Types of Partnerships



Water system partnerships encompass a range of opportunities for systems to work together in order to sustainably provide drinking water services.

Increasing Transfer of Responsibility





The Story of Two Water Systems

Vinton County Water & Jackson County Water



Location of Systems

Ohio
MHI \$40,956



Vinton County
MHI \$29,465

Jackson County
MHI \$30,661

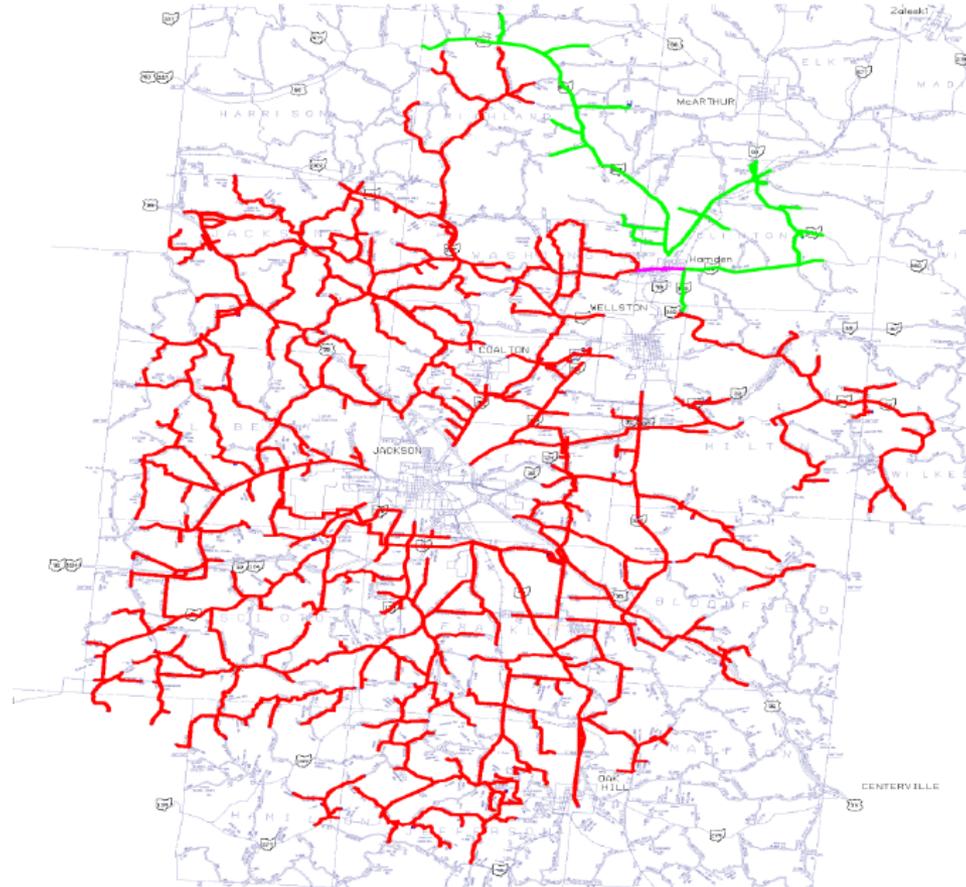


Service Area Map



Key

Jackson County Water Company, Inc.	Red lines
Vinton County Water Company	Green lines
Connection	Purple line



The Systems at a Glance

Vinton County Water Company



- Member-owned Not -for-Profit
- Served a very rural area
- Served about 600 connections
- Distribution System bought treated surface water
- System is approximately 20 years old

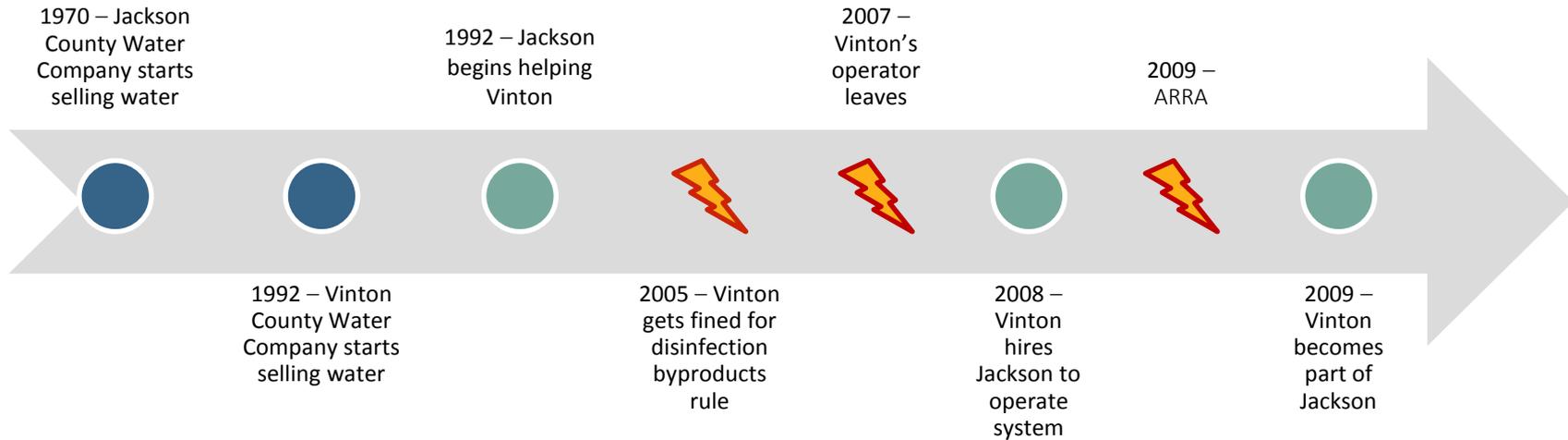
Jackson County Water Company



- Member-owned Not -for-Profit
- Serves a very rural area
- Serves about 6,000 connection
- Treats and distributes ground water
- System is about 40 years old



Twenty Years of Partnering

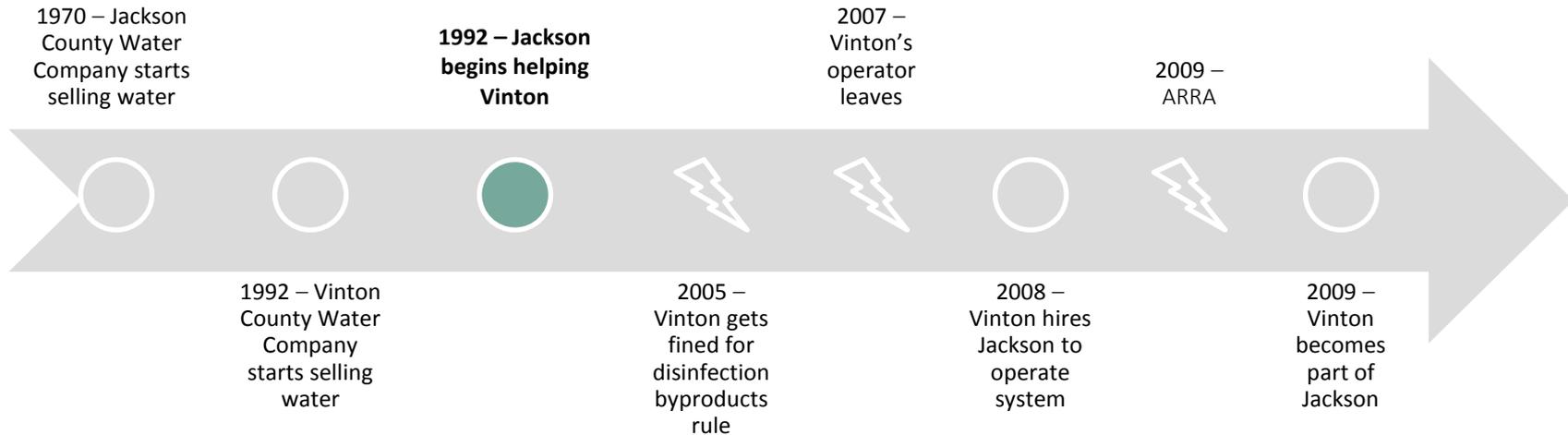


Key

Founding	Blue Circle
Partnership stages	Green Circle
Events	Lightening Bolt



Jackson County Lends a Helping Hand



Jackson County Lends a Helping Hand

- Jackson County Water Company acted as a good neighbor to Vinton County Water Company.

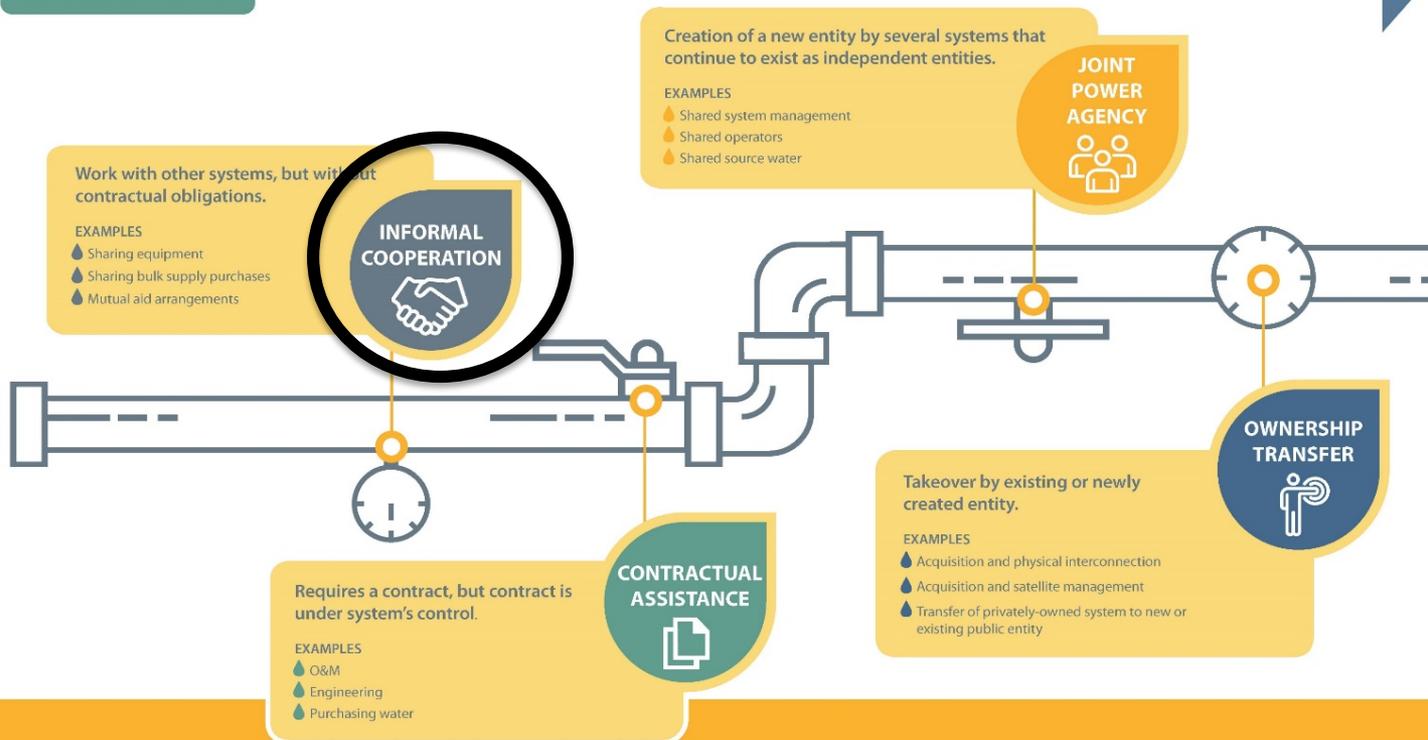


Informal Cooperation



Water system partnerships encompass a range of opportunities for systems to work together in order to sustainably provide drinking water services.

Increasing Transfer of Responsibility



Changes in Vinton

1970 – Jackson
County Water
Company starts
selling water

1992 – Jackson
begins helping
Vinton

**2007 –
Vinton's
operator
leaves**

2009 –
ARRA

1992 – Vinton
County Water
Company
starts selling
water

2005 –
Vinton gets
fined for
disinfection
byproducts
rule

2008 –
Vinton
hires
Jackson to
operate
system

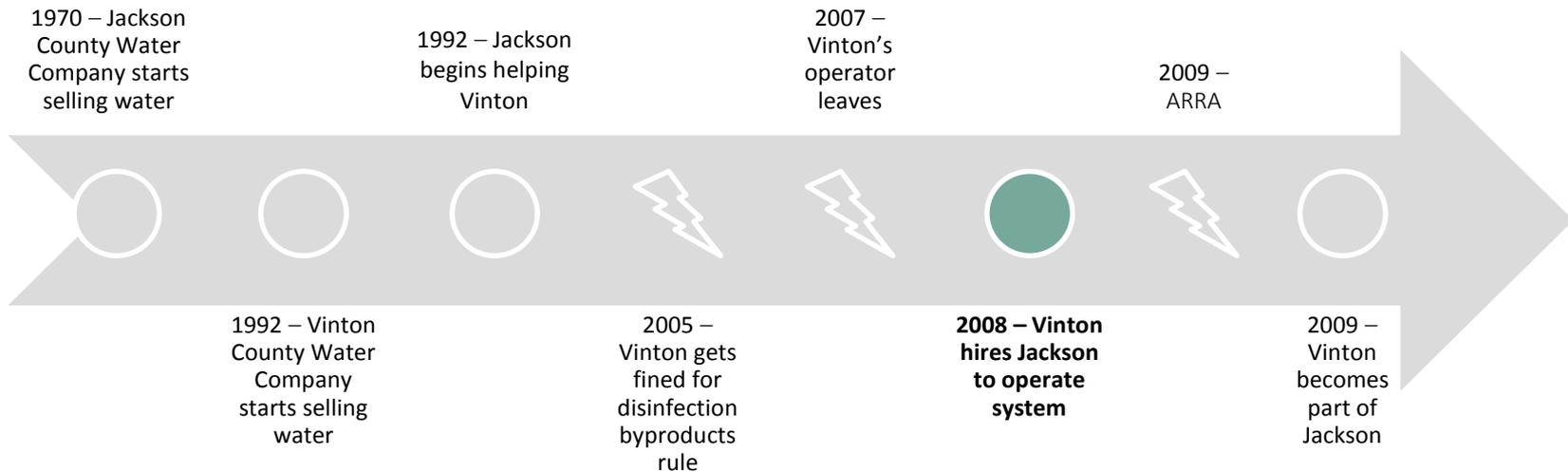
2009 –
Vinton
becomes
part of
Jackson



A New Working Relationship



Vinton County Hires Jackson County



Vinton County Hires Jackson County

- Vinton County contracted with Jackson County to operate their system.

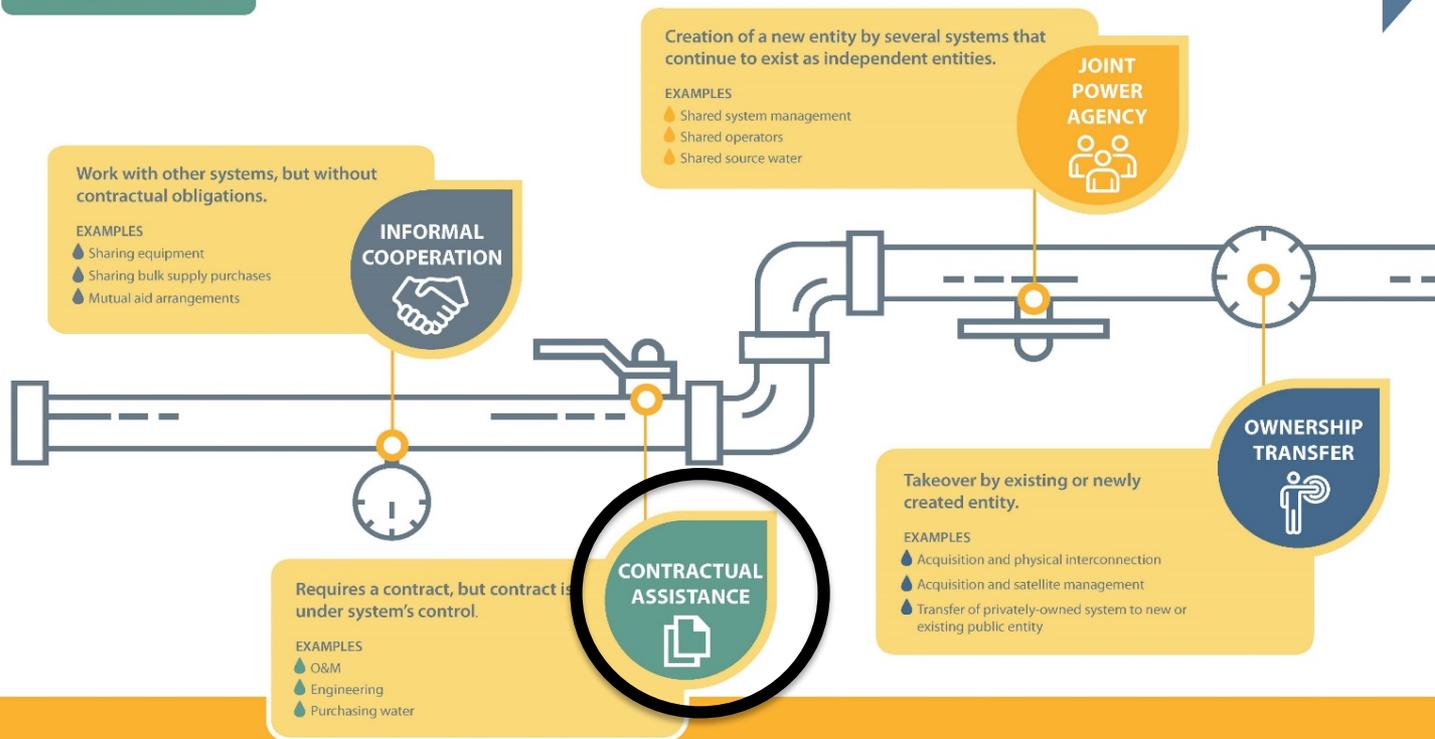


Contractual Assistance



Water system partnerships encompass a range of opportunities for systems to work together in order to sustainably provide drinking water services.

Increasing Transfer of Responsibility



Negotiating to Sell Vinton County Water

- Vinton County Water negotiated to sell the system to Jackson County Water.
- USDA Rural Development financed both Vinton County Water and Jackson County Water in the beginning.
- USDA Rural Development brought the two water systems together for early meetings to discuss a sale.
- There were payment issues due to poor financial health.



Negotiating to Sell Vinton County Water

- Could not keep operator
- High THMs exceeded MCLs
- Board did not have the training and experience necessary to make operational decisions

OhioEPA



Negotiating to Sell Vinton County Water

- Jackson County Water could provide economies of scale for new wells and treatment.
- Fit within Jackson County's long-term plan.
- Gave Jackson an opportunity to fix its G-Line violations.
- Customers voted twice in 2008 not to sell Vinton County Water.
- The truck incident.



**Jackson County Water had been helping Vinton County Water for years.
It had **learned** the system.**



ARRA



1970 – Jackson County Water Company starts selling water

1992 – Jackson begins helping Vinton

2007 – Vinton's operator leaves

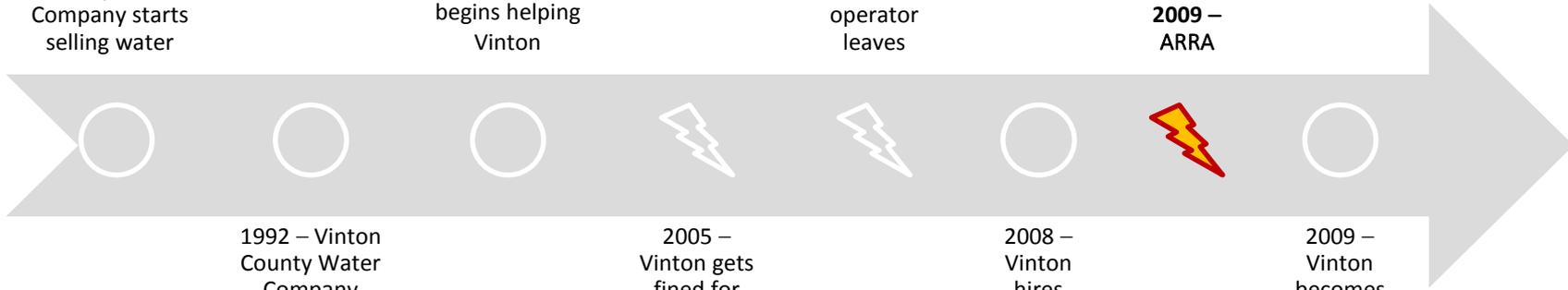
2009 – ARRA

1992 – Vinton County Water Company starts selling water

2005 – Vinton gets fined for disinfection byproducts rule

2008 – Vinton hires Jackson to operate system

2009 – Vinton becomes part of Jackson

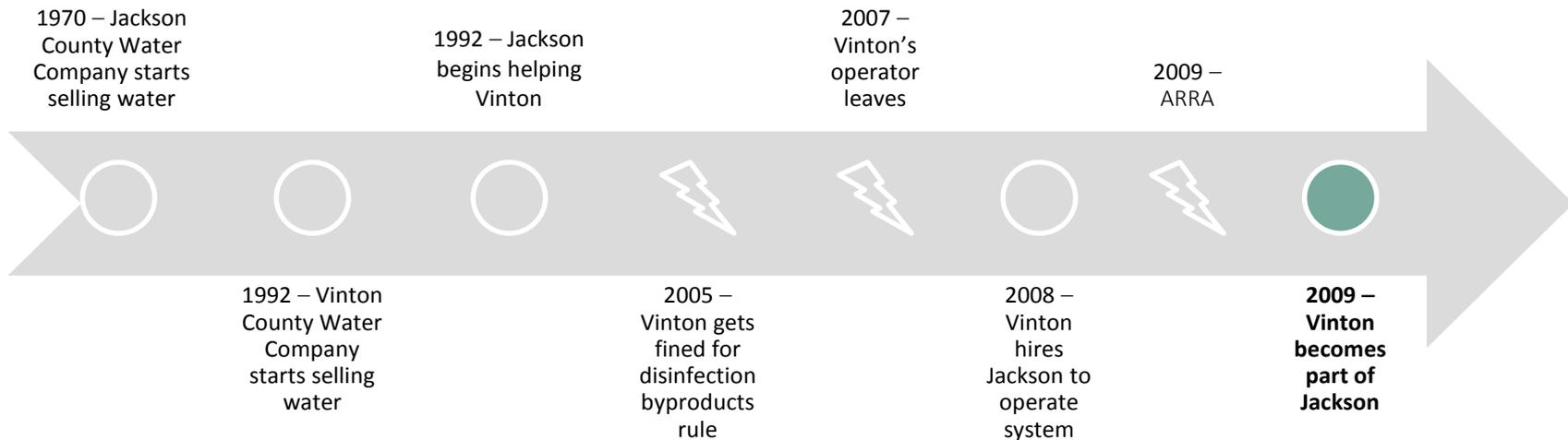


Negotiating to Sell Vinton County Water

- RCAP provided an INDEPENDENT view.
 - It completed a five-year forecast and made rate recommendations for Vinton County Water.
 - It held a visioning session with the Board of Vinton County Water to look for alternative solutions.
 - It also worked with Jackson County Water to determine their needs.



A Lasting Partnership – Vinton County Sells to Jackson County



Vinton County Sells to Jackson County

The Results:

- Customers of both systems receive **reliable service**
- Both utilities are in **compliance**
- Rates are **affordable**
- There is improved local buy-in and stakeholder relations
- Vinton County Water is more **sustainable**

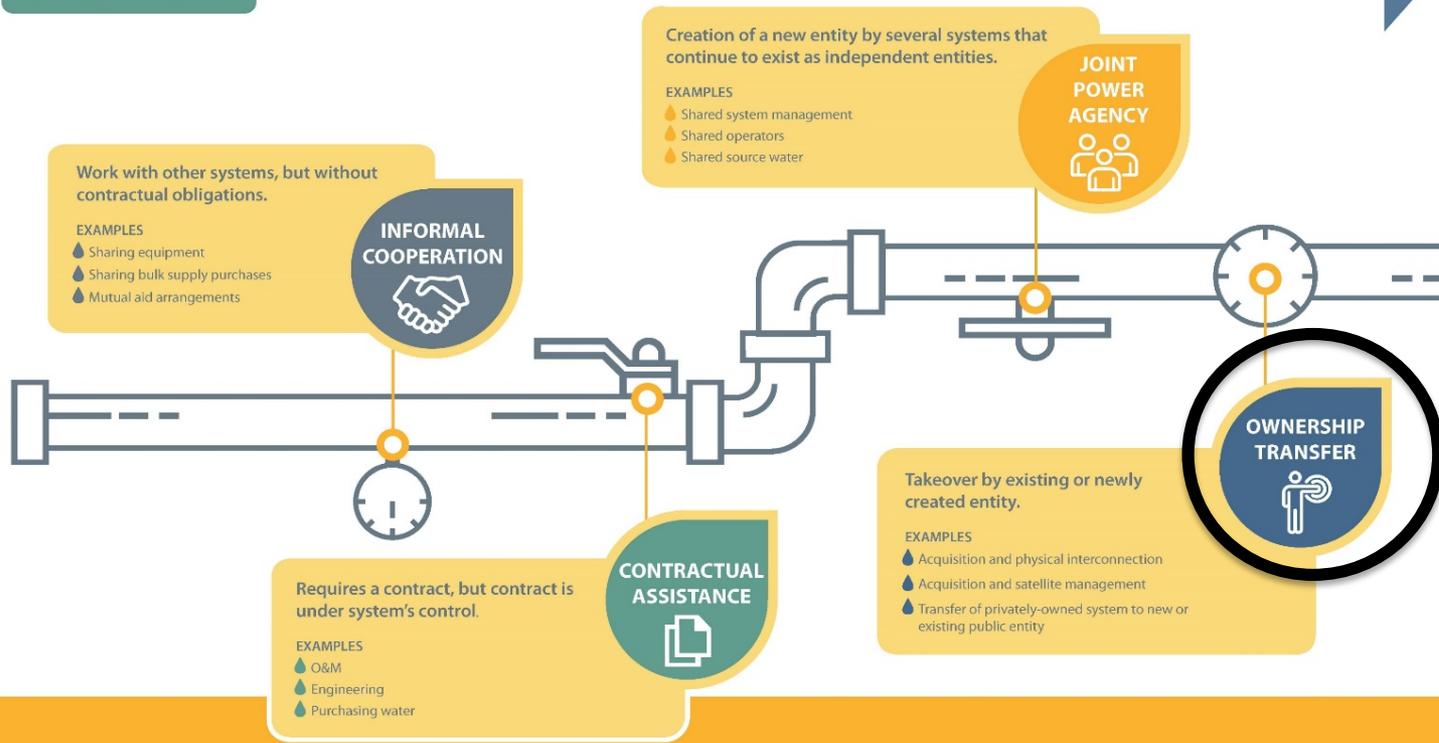


Ownership Transfer



Water system partnerships encompass a range of opportunities for systems to work together in order to sustainably provide drinking water services.

Increasing Transfer of Responsibility



Lessons Learned

Ohio EPA

- Fines do not solve problems
- It is necessary to educate the decision makers
- The system must be willing to resolve its problems



USDA Rural Development

- Technical assistance is one of USDA's responsibilities
- USDA should stay on top of the situation
- Partnerships are a tool



Lessons Learned

- Look for a **win-win** solution
- **Transparency** is key to building trust
- Maintain mutual **respect**
- Be patient, **patient**, patient



Closing Thoughts



Additional Information

For more information on the benefits of Water System Partnerships, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/water-system-partnerships-meeting>

