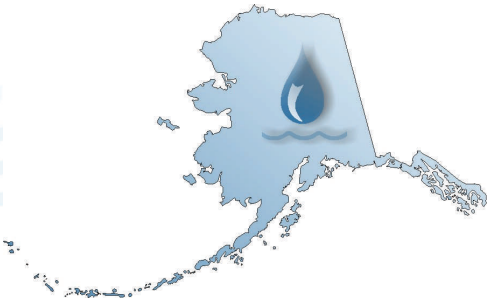
Northern Flows



Spring

Alaska's Drinking Water Program Newsletter

Issue 33 ● Spring 2008

Message from the Manager

Spring is here and the planning for our summer projects and activities is in progress, or is it? Does it seem as though the concept of "planning" is a recurring theme in the "Message from the Manager" and scattered throughout the Drinking Water Program Newsletter? If you answered "yes" to the previous two questions, then you are paying attention to what you read in the newsletter and are "proactive." Yes, proactive behavior includes having a written plan that allows you to focus on your water system's maintenance, treatment, and distribution system functions. Understanding your regulatory requirements, not just for compliance purposes, but also for the public health protection of your customers and ways to optimize your treatment system is critical for a water system owner and operator. We do know, as noted in my previous message, "that when everyone is doing their job, has a written plan for what they need to do, when they need to do it, and then implement that plan, our water, with few exceptions, is clean and of predictable high quality."

To keep you thinking in a proactive manner, if you are a public water system (PWS) owner, have you received your customized water system monitoring schedule for 2008? If not, please contact your local Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Drinking Water Program Environmental Program Specialist. Our goal was to get these monitoring schedules to every federally regulated PWS by March 31, 2008. Please let us know how we are doing.

A quick update on ongoing Drinking Water Program projects in progress or planned for the next few months includes the following: Drinking Water Regulations, 18 AAC 80, revision package DW 2008-1, is being prepared for a 30-day public comment period. URS, Inc. is currently working under a contract to complete 235 PWS source water assessments statewide for new or newly discovered Class B (Transient Non-Community) water systems and at the same time, Drinking Water Program staff are completing assessments statewide for the new or newly discovered Class A (Community and Non-Transient Non-Community) water systems. Engineering educational workshops were held in Wasilla on February 21, 2008, and in Anchorage at the Alaska Pacific University (APU) campus on April 16, 2008. Lastly, following-up on proactive behavior, take the time now to register for the annual Alaska Water Wastewater Management Conference (AWWMA) in Anchorage, May 6 – 8, 2008. This is a great opportunity to learn about new treatment technologies, develop a greater understanding of new drinking water regulatory requirements, and network with drinking water and wastewater professionals.

The regular Legislative Session is over for the year and the Division of Environmental Health, Drinking Water Program feels very blessed! We have completed our 3-year staffing plan for the program with our final fiscal year 2009 increment request. Thank you to the Alaska Legislature and for the diligence of the DEC senior management and our Division Director, Kristin Ryan. We have added 14 new positions to the Drinking Water Program over 3 years. Our greatest challenge at this time has been recruiting qualified new staff and the retention of experienced staff. Over the past two months, we have added several new staff to the Drinking Water Program, Compliance and Technical Services group in the Anchorage office. Please welcome Justin Holvoet, Analyst Programmer; Ian Blake, Environmental Program Specialist; and Leslie Shurtleff, Environmental Program Specialist.

Unfortunately, two staff from our Anchorage office have left the Drinking Water

(Cont. on page 2)

This Issue

What's Wrong With This Picture? 2 & 3

The First Barrier (Drinking Water Protection) 3 & 5

Word Find 4

AWWMA Conference 4

Resource Corner 6 & 7

Regulations Corner 7 & 8

Message from the Manager (cont.) *By James Weise*

Program. Jamie Yager, Environmental Program Specialist, accepted a position with the Municipality of Anchorage; and Julia Pieper, Administrative Clerk II, has chosen other career opportunities. We wish them well in their endeavors. We recently completed recruitment for an Environmental Engineer II for the Anchorage office. Mr. Paul Gabbert has accepted a position in the Drinking Water Program and will start May 1, 2008. We are currently recruiting an Environmental Program Manager (EPM) I for the Wasilla office and an Environmental Program Specialist for the Anchorage office. The EPM I position in the Wasilla office is needed to fill the vacancy from the upcoming retirement of Lynn Lowman. On April 30, 2008, Lynn will be leaving the DEC Drinking Water Program with over 21 years experience. We wish Lynn well in her many new adventures and thank her for her many years of service to the Drinking Water Program and the residents of the Sate of Alaska. Now, if you are interested in working in a friendly and "family style" work environment, as well as a dynamic and challenging regulatory public health program, check out Workplace Alaska recruitment as we post these DEC Drinking Water Program positions. All of these positions provide support and promote the program's focused goal of "drinking water, good to the last drop." Check for Workplace Alaska recruitment notices at: → http://www.workplace.alaska.gov and click on "Workplace Alaska."

Now for the spring showers, where are they?

James R. Weise

James Weise
Manager
Alaska Drinking Water Program

What's Wrong With This Picture? *By Scott Forgue*

What's wrong with this picture?

The photograph below was taken during an inspection of a public water system.

"What's wrong with this picture?" (Answer on page 3)

What's Wrong With This Picture? (cont.) *By Scott Forgue*

ANSWER:

In the first picture, sanitary risks associated with the lack of an adequate sanitary seal are apparent (see the ***What's Wrong with this Picture*** in the last issue of ***Northern Flows*** for more details regarding the source protection requirements for a public water system source well or refer to the Drinking Water Regulations, 18 AAC 80.)

The Department received a call from a concerned citizen and a spot check visit was performed by one of the Department's Environmental Health Officers. The owner and operator of the facility were contacted and a new sanitary seal was installed.

This picture shows the well with the new sanitary seal and helps illustrate the effective public health protection resulting from the cooperation of the public, conscientious owners, and the Department's staff in two programs, Food Safety & Sanitation and Drinking Water.

If you would like to see your picture showing something wrong with a drinking water system in a future issue of *Northern Flows*, please send the pictures to Scott Forgue at: Scott.Forgue@alaska.gov.

The First Barrier (Drinking Water Protection) *By Charley Palmer*

Protecting your source of drinking water from potential contamination is the first step in a multi-barrier approach to maintaining clean and safe drinking water.

Current Events

Source Water Assessments

Drinking Water Protection (DWP) staff has ramped up their efforts to complete additional PWS Source Water Assessments (SWAs). We have contracted with URS Corp. to have additional SWAs completed for Class B (transient non-community) public water systems. Also, DWP staff are working on completing additional SWAs for Class A (community and non-transient non-community) public water systems, and for additional sources (i.e. new well, intake, and/or spring) for existing systems. This group of assessments will not include those that have already been completed in the past, or those that were documented by DEC engineers after the date of the start of the contract, March 5, 2008. For these really new systems and sources, SWAs will be completed sometime in the future, after the current batch is done.

2008-2010 SOC/OOC Monitoring Waiver applications

Many of you have asked DWP staff and DW Program staff from other offices about the status of SOC/OOC Monitoring Waiver applications for compliance period 2008-2010. The new application is not available at this time because the applications are associated with our regulations, which are in the process of being revised. Unfortunately, we do not have a firm date on the availability of the application, but we are hopeful that the new application will be available soon. Please continue to check our website at: → http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/dw/ and future issues of *Northern Flows* issues for updates.

Drinking Water Protection Overview

DWP staff are responsible for encouraging public water systems to develop and implement a Drinking Water Protection Plan (Plan) to protect their source(s) of drinking water. The Plan is a way in which existing protection efforts can be documented and new, more effective strategies can be identified. Developing a Plan can vary by system; for example, it can depend on your system's classification (how big or small), source (surface water or groundwater), and location (urban or rural). Once a Plan is developed, it can earn approval from DWP staff and your system could receive special benefits. This type of Plan is called an "Endorsed Drinking Water Protection Plan." Some of the benefits may include the following:

- Recognition of proactive efforts when DEC evaluates future SOC/OOC Monitoring Waiver applications.
- Your community will be informed of your proactive efforts and you therefore should not be in the position of explaining why you didn't plan ahead.

(Cont. on page 5)

Word Find

By Jennifer Blommer

Alaska Drinking Water Program

G N M W E N T N A S F E A I E L C
N O E E E P A E T P L F P C D C P
I I T L T A O R G N K T S I A O C
R T S L C I N V N D C I E R R C P
O A Y H N M I T I T Y R N A A T C
T N S E L S T P P S M L M P N W T
I I R A V U N O C R N L A I A D T
N M E D C R I O O Y M C N T L P C
O A T O D F U N I K I S M W L L I
M T A F L A Y S O T O E N T B R S
M N W E U C N N Y I A E T P T A R
R O C A A E N S K R T L C L M Y R
O C I T A W W T E P A A U P P E R
F S L A S A N I O T C T L G L E T
I S B N N T A I N S N I I O E I E
L O U A R E T A W G N I K N I R D
O R P H C R N A M G N A L A A V M
C C O M P L I A N C E L L S A S C

Capacity
Cross Contamination
Regulations
Surface Water
Coliform Monitoring
Drinking Water
Sampling
Violation
Compliance
Public Water System
Sanitary Survey
Wellhead

AWWMA CONFERENCE

48th ANNUAL STATEWIDE TRAINING CONFERENCE MAY 6 - 8, 2008
Egan Convention Center, Downtown Anchorage

About the AWWMA

AWWMA works to provide opportunities that bring knowledge, expertise, and technology to water and wastewater industry professionals in Alaska. Our conferences and workshops are attended by a diverse group of professionals from large and small utilities, and the professionals that operate, educate, and regulate them. Our organization is governed by a Board of Directors and driven by Committees - a team of volunteers dedicated to the water and wastewater profession in an effort to provide Clean, Safe Water for Alaska.

To learn more about Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association, register for this conference or future conferences, please visit the AWWMA website at: http://awwma.org/

The First Barrier (Drinking Water Protection) (cont.)

By Charley Palmer

- Decreased frequency of sanitary surveys from 3 years to 5 years.
- Increased qualification for future funding to include low interest loans or possible grants.
- Increased consideration for separation distance waivers.
- Potential reduction of costs for treatment of contaminated drinking water from the lack of implementation of adequate protection.

To get started with developing a Plan, look at your Source Water Assessment (SWA) for your system. The SWA is a big step that we (DEC) have already taken for many systems, and we are currently working on completing SWAs for many additional systems. It identifies many risks and vulnerabilities associated with your drinking water source area, which can be used to focus your protection efforts so that they may have the most impact in protecting your source of drinking water.

Currently, we are relying on the voluntary effort of individual system owners and/or operators to take the lead in protecting their source(s) of drinking water by developing and implementing a Drinking Water Protection Plan and strongly encourage that they ultimately seek an Endorsed Plan. The following are the four major steps to developing and implementing a Plan:

1. **Assemble a Planning Team** and define each member's role and responsibilities. The team should include members of the local community and local government that can aid in the development and implementation of the Plan.

2. **Review your Source Water Assessment** to help focus your efforts on areas where the most significant and cost effective protection can be accomplished.

3. **Create a Written Drinking Water Protection Plan** and have it reviewed and approved by DWP staff to become your system's Endorsed Plan in order to become eligible for program benefits.

4. **Keep it Up-to-Date** by reviewing your Plan on an annual basis and making the necessary modifications to improve the overall protection of your source of drinking water.

It is important to note that the DEC Drinking Water Program is encouraging voluntary effort at this time, but a low level of participation may lead to future regulation that would require systems to develop and implement Drinking Water Protection Plans. Currently, systems have the flexibility to individualize their Plans to reflect the needs of their community, but this flexibility could be more limited if a statewide regulation is in place. So, be proactive and take advantage of the tools that DWP staff have assembled, most importantly Source Water Assessments, as well as other tools that can be found on our website: →

http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/dw/DWP/source_water.html

* * *

Northern Flows E-Newsletter Subscription

If you are interested in subscribing at no cost to our quarterly *Northern Flows* e-Newsletter, please go to the Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Environmental Health, Drinking Water Program's website and click on "subscribe."
http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/dw/publications/newsletters.html

Click on "unsubscribe" to remove yourself from the mailing list.

Resource Corner - Tribal Utility Support at ANTHC

By Ian Blake

The term "environmental health" is far-reaching and multi-faceted, encompassing a wide variety of interactions between human beings and the natural world. While it can be difficult to identify rigid distinctions within these relationships, support and regulatory agencies often adopt such an approach. For example, sanitation and wastewater issues can have a dramatic influence on drinking water quality, yet engagement with the environment in each case assumes two very different forms and is regulated by different divisions within the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). For rural communities struggling with a multitude of interconnected environmental issues, creating a well-rounded solution from highly specialized agencies with one particular area of expertise can be difficult. Luckily for rural communities, The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is an organization that is able to provide a variety of specialized services with layers of overlapping expertise and support.

ANTHC was first created in 1997 as a non-profit organization designed to provide health services statewide to native communities. Managed by Alaska native tribal governments and their regional health organizations, ANTHC provides an array of services to native communities (defined as communities where native individuals represent >50% of community population) around Alaska. While its most visible endeavor is the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, ANTHC offers a complete assortment of health and environmental services. In just a short time, ANTHC has become a world-wide leader and model in providing health services to native populations, hosting representatives from regions as diverse as Australia, China, Panama, and Greenland.

Chief to ANTHC's mission as it relates to environmental health is the Division of Environmental Health and Engineering (DEHE). DEHE is ANTHC's second largest division, providing assistance in the planning, design, construction, and operation of public health infrastructure to native communities. DEHE also provides invaluable public health and safety education resources, available to both individual communities and tribal health organizations. Of particular interest to water system operators and administrators is the Tribal Utility Support Program (TUS).

Since its inception, the Tribal Utility Support Program has provided technical training and assistance to water and wastewater system operators throughout the state of Alaska. The goal of the program is to ensure the safe and efficient operation of village water and wastewater systems. To that end, the program maintains the Alaska Utility Supply Center (AUSC), a parts and materials service. Communities are able to purchase equipment necessary for the safe operation of water systems, from sample kits to hardware components to chemicals and reagents, directly from AUSC at a discounted cost. Parts are shipped directly from Anchorage, and the result is an expeditious and effective "one-stop shopping" experience for customers.

New this year, the TUS has launched the Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative (ARUC). This approach, based on the highly successful Rural Utility Collaborative (RUC) Program managed by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, sets as its goals the "[creation of] an economy of scale toward maintaining rural Alaska water and wastewater systems, protecting human health, improving the quality of life, setting the stage for viable economic development, and fostering Native self determination." Studies generally show that participation in the RUC Program leads to increased compliance with environmental health regulations. In an effort to provide a more consistent level of support state-wide, the ARUC Program was established, incorporating the RUC Program. AUSC is expected to be incorporated as one service of the new ARUC Program.

Participation in the ARUC is voluntary and limited to native communities (as defined above). The ARUC provides contractual arrangements with communities to find and hire water system operators, ultimately leading to higher wages and longer-term, more consistent relationships between communities and operators. ARUC works with communities to accurately and

(Cont. on page 7)

Resource Corner - Tribal Utility Support at ANTHC (cont.) *By Ian Blake*

equitably bill local utility customers and provides assistance in the design and implementation of bill collecting systems. Simply put, the ARUC focuses on resolving common problems many rural utilities struggle with, both administratively and operationally. ARUC is also working with RUBA (Rural Utilities Business Advisor) to ensure that communities that join the ARUC automatically become RUBA compliant. This is a major step in the recognition of the efforts of community authorities as they work to improve their local utilities and can accelerate the process for obtaining grants to further develop key utility infrastructure.

External to the ARUC Program, TUS offers a wide level of community-based support, including several training conferences focused on water system operations issues. Additionally, TUS produces a biannual newsletter, *Pumphouse Pipeline*, with program-specific news and calendars. Current and past editions of *Pumphouse Pipeline* are available at the TUS website, http://www.anthc.org/cs/dehe/sustops/. Information about ANTHC can be found on the internet at: → http://www.anthc.org/

Clearly, ANTHC offers comprehensive support and assistance, producing a tangible and meaningful environmental health benefit in native communities around the state.

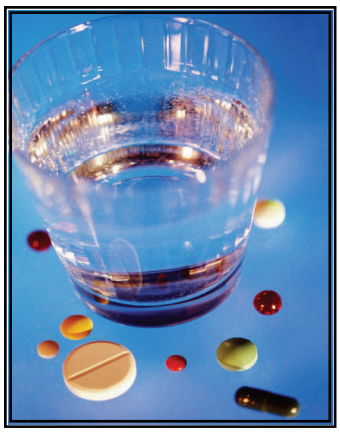
Regulations Corner *By Gloria Collins*

Alaska's Drinking Water Regulations, 18 AAC 80, are currently in the process of being revised and should be available for public comment very soon. These proposed changes include the following:

- Replacing much of Article 3 and Article 6 with the adoption by reference of the corresponding provision from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR);
- Replacing the terminology "Class A" and "Class B" public water system with the federal terminology, "community water system," "non-transient non-community water system," and "transient non-community water system";
- Revising "owner or operator" requirements to "owner" or "operator," as appropriate; and
- Revising the requirements for separation distances and corresponding waivers.

Public notice that provides for a 30-day comment period on these proposed changes will appear soon in the *Anchorage Daily News,* and it will be posted to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation "Public Notices" webpage at: → http://www.dec.state.ak.us/public_notices.htm

Now, shifting attention from



the state to the national level, much national media coverage has been given recently to the topic of pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) in the nation's water bodies and drinking water supplies. These substances include prescription and over-the counter drugs, veterinary drugs, fragrances, cosmetics, and sun-screen products.

People are asking what effects these PPCPs have on the environment and on their health, and they want to know what is being done to safeguard the environment and human health.

For many years, the EPA has been conducting ongoing research involving potential contaminants that may occur in drinking water. EPA has an established program that uses a tiered approach for future regulation of substances found to be harmful. Every five years, EPA reviews a list of contaminants, largely based on the Contaminant Candidate List (CCL), and decides which of those compounds should undergo further monitoring and data collection.

This monitoring occurs through the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR). We are at present in the second monitoring cycle, or UCMR2, which runs from 2007-2010. After careful evaluation of the research data and public comment, EPA determines which of the compounds should have health-based standards and become a regulated contaminant to help protect drinking water.

One pharmaceutical product, nitroglycerin,

(Cont. on page 8)

Regulations Corner (cont.)

By Gloria Collins

appears on the current CCL (called draft CCL #3, as it is the third such list since 1996), which lists a total of 104 possible drinking water contaminants.

The EPA is asking for public comment on this list of substances, the approach used to develop the list, and other specific contaminants. Comments must be received by EPA on or before May 21, 2008. More information, including how to submit comments, can be accessed at: → http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/ccl3.html

Additional information on Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products can be found at: → http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html

More significant drinking water news from the national level highlights the recently proposed rule by the EPA on *Drinking Water Regulations for Aircraft Public Water Systems*, also known as Airline Drinking Water Rule (ADWR). EPA is requesting public comments on these proposed requirements, and comments must be received by EPA on or before July 8, 2008. For more information, please go to: http://www.epa.gov/safewater/airlinewater/regs.html#proposed and for instructions on submitting written public comments to the proposed regulations, click on the link under "Federal Register Notice."

With the proposed changes to the Alaska Drinking Water Regulations, and proposals for federal regulations regarding airline water systems and possible additional regulated contaminants in the future, this spring is seeing plenty of activity in the world of drinking water!

For further information, please contact Gloria Collins at: Gloria.Collins@alaska.gov or (907) 269-3075.

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