

Northern Flows



Alaska's Drinking Water & Wastewater Program Newsletter

Issue 8 • Summer/Fall 2001



Message from the Manager

Amazing, it is mid September and the birch leaves are changing to various shades of yellow very quickly and dropping just as fast. I see faint hints of "termination dust" on the mountains, and I ask myself, where has the summer gone? We missed our summer issue of the *Northern Flows*, so we have combined our summer and fall issues for a seasonal change. With everything happening so quickly, the time is now for public water system (PWS) owners and operators to prepare for end of the year compliance monitoring and, ultimately, winter.



This past summer, many of us had the opportunity to participate in a workshop, presented by Dr. Malcolm Sparrow, that covered *Environmental Problem Solving*. Additionally, many of us attended a *Risk Communication*

and Community Outrage workshop presented by Dr. Peter Sandman. In the DW/WW Program we will be implementing the lessons learned from these workshops.

Several prominent examples include rewriting the Source Water Protection fact sheet so that it focuses on what the assessment is, and more importantly perhaps, what it isn't. This will help you, the owner of the PWS, interpret the results of the assessment and identify what follow-up actions will make the most sense.

We'll use the Environmental Problem Solving approach to address key public health and drinking water compliance issues throughout the state. The first issue we will focus on is the lack of continuous monthly bacteria sampling for the Total Coliform Rule (TCR) in some rural Alaska PWS which have been, or are, on the EPA Significant Noncompliance (SNC) List. We also plan to use the same problem solving approach toward our Class A Non-transient Non-community water systems, specifically - **schools**, to ensure greater public health protection and better compliance for all the rules. We will be issuing "Report Cards" to all the schools on their overall compliance with the Alaska Drinking Water Regulations.

And, finally, this "Message from the Manager" represents an attempt to put to practice what I learned in the *Risk Communication and Community Outrage* workshop. It might seem more straightforward it might even seem a bit blunt, but the goal is to ensure you know exactly what to expect in the world of drinking water.

Looking at drinking water on a national level, we are expecting that several new federal rules will be promulgated this fall including Arsenic, Ground Water, and Radon. Two of these rules, the Arsenic Rule and the Ground Water Rule, will have a *significant* impact on Alaska public water systems (PWS), particularly small systems serving less than 500 persons. The Radon Rule should have less of an impact because the state has been collecting some of the necessary data to support future decision-making regarding this Rule.

Let's look at the Arsenic Rule first. The maximum contaminant level (MCL) was reduced from 50 ug/L (ppb) to 10 ug/L (ppb), January 22, 2001 for all Class A PWS (Community and Non-transient Non-community water systems). EPA decided to review the science behind this new MCL, and put the proposed new MCL of 10 ug/L (ppb) on hold for a 60-day review and reconsideration. Since then, several workgroups have been put together

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SOC/OOC Waivers Expire At The End-Of-The-Year

A Synthetic Organic Chemical (SOC) or Other Organic Chemical (OOC) Monitoring Waiver relieves a public water system from the requirement to test for SOC/OOC contaminants during a 3-year compliance period. SOC's and OOC's are typically pesticides (insecticides and herbicides)

regulated SOC/OOC contaminant during the compliance period. In late 2001, or early in 2002, the Drinking Water and Wastewater Program will send SOC/OOC waiver renewal applications to every public water system that is required to monitor for SOC/OOC contaminants. It is the public water system's responsibility to apply for

If the PWS currently has an SOC/OOC waiver, the fee for the waiver renewal is:

Application Review Fee: \$65 per application.

Keep a look out for the SOC/OOC wavier application package which you should receive later this year or early next year. If you do not receive a waiver application from us by

EXPIRES

which have not generally been extensively used in Alaska.

Most water systems in Alaska received SOC/OOC waivers for the 1999 - 2001 compliance period. These waivers **will expire on December 31, 2001**. The new waiver, when issued, will cover the 2002-2004 compliance period.

Monitoring Requirements

If a waiver is not applied for, and granted, Class A Public Water Systems (PWS) will be required to take up to four consecutive quarterly samples for each

the waiver.

Cost Savings and Fees

Public Water Systems will save thousands of dollars if they receive a SOC/OOC monitoring waiver.

If the PWS has not previously applied for a SOC/OOC waiver or if the water system was previously denied a waiver, the fees for the wavier are:

Application Review Fee: \$65 per application
Waiver Issuance Fee: \$195 per application

March 1, 2002, please contact one of our offices and we will gladly send you the waiver application. It will save your water system a significant amount of money.~



Message from the Manager Continued

on a national level to review the technical data pertaining to the initial rule development as well as the cost-benefit data to support the proposed MCL of 10 ug/L (ppb). Congress has mandated to the Bush Administration, and also EPA, to "reinstate the tougher standard for arsenic in drinking water that had been issued by the Clinton Administration." This arsenic standard is 10 ug/L (ppb).

EPA is seeking additional comments on the MCL options for Arsenic in Drinking Water Rule. The MCL options available for comment are: 3 ug/L (ppb) - "the feasible level"; 5 ug/L (ppb) - the level EPA proposed in June 2000; 10 ug/L (ppb) - the currently proposed level published in January 2001; and 20 ug/L (ppb). Comments to the EPA must be in writing and received by October 31, 2001. The State of Alaska has submitted comments supporting 20 ug/L (ppb). The science we've reviewed indicates this level is safe for human consumption.

I strongly recommend that PWS owners comment directly to EPA on the MCL options for Arsenic in Drinking Water Rule. After the MCL is finalized and promulgated, it will be too late. An MCL for a regulated contaminant cannot be waived, nor are exemptions and variances available. All PWS will have to be in compliance with the new arsenic MCL by 2006 -- no exceptions. If a PWS cannot meet the new MCL by 2006, then alternatives for that PWS will have to be developed by the PWS owner. These alternatives could include developing a new source, treatment options, hooking into another PWS, or providing bottled water to all the PWS customers. All of the alternatives have the potential

to be very costly, especially for small systems. At the currently proposed MCL of 10 ug/L (ppb), approximately 40 Alaska PWS would exceed the MCL. I recommend that all PWS check the arsenic level in their drinking water to see how the different levels being reviewed will affect you.

Please check the EPA Website for additional information about this proposal: 

The Ground Water Rule is expected to be finalized and released by EPA in November 2001, possibly early 2002. It will focus on bacteria and viruses in public drinking water systems that use ground water as their source as well as systems that mix surface water and ground water, in which the ground water is added directly to the distribution system. Approximately 70% of the small PWS in Alaska do not use any form of disinfection. For those PWS's, this Rule will require a hydrogeologic sensitivity assessment of the aquifer to be completed. Any PWS that has detected fecal indicators in the distribution system will have to undertake source water microbial monitoring. It is important to note that much of the work done by the Drinking Water Protection Program during completion of PWS source water assessments will be applicable towards the hydrogeologic sensitivity assessment of the PWS aquifer.

In addition, the Rule will require some PWS that currently do not have any form of disinfection to disinfect, either because of microbial contamination or because the system obtains water from a hydrogeologically sensitive aquifer.

The added disinfection will in turn require the PWS operator to have a more advanced level of certification required under the new ADEC Operator Certification requirements.

The public comment period has ended on this Rule, but for additional information concerning the EPA proposed Ground Water Rule, please check the following Website: 

A final Radon Rule has been delayed since early fall of 2000, however, EPA does expect to issue it in late 2001. This Rule will set two MCLs for radon in drinking water:

- a conservative 4000 pCi/L if the State has a multimedia mitigation (MMM) program in place or
- a prescriptive 300 pCi/L if the State does not implement a MMM Program.

In basic terms, a MMM Program is a combined Indoor Air and Drinking Water approach to increased public awareness towards radon. Radon is a naturally occurring colorless, odorless, unreactive (inert), radioactive gas. Radon is the most dense (heaviest) gas known. EPA considers radon to be a suspected carcinogen that primarily affects the upper respiratory system (lungs and throat). Although States can develop and implement MMM Programs, they are not required to do so by EPA. However, the State can require local governments and utilities to develop and implement a local MMM Program for the customers serviced by the utility.

We have been preparing for this

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<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/arsenic.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/gwr.html>

Sanitary Survey Forms are Changing!

Over the last several years the Department has received numerous requests and recommendations on how to change the existing sanitary survey forms we have been using since 1993. The comments have ranged from placing the forms in an electronic format to reducing the length of the form and numerous questions that were not practical.

In August of 2000, the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB), that the Department formed to assist in the development of a State Capacity Development Strategy, provided the comments to the Department in a "Report of Findings" on how the State could use its authority and resources to help public water systems (PWS) improve capacity. The Strategy was a requirement of the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. In the "Report of Findings" the CAB recommended that the Department develop and utilize an enhanced sanitary survey that would permit the Department's field staff to periodically collect Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) information about each of the State's regulated water systems. This information can be used to determine those systems most in need of TMF assistance.

Thanks, in part to two grants from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department is very close to having a new and enhanced electronic sanitary survey form. The first grant from EPA funded 5 four-day sanitary survey training classes presented by Lee Michalsky of the Environmental Technical Program located on the Sitka Campus of the University of Alaska Southeast. Comments on the format and the

questions on the new forms were collected from these sanitary survey training workshops. The second grant has funded the enhancement of the form and, the conversion of the form to an electronic format. This work was completed by the Environmental Finance Center of the Boise State University.

After looking at all the comments received and the new requirements on sanitary surveys that have come from EPA in the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule, the new forms, unfortunately, will not be getting shorter as many of the comments we received recommended. We are, however looking at making sure that the sanitary survey forms are put together to promote ease of use. If you like to submit the form in a hard copy format - you can. If you prefer the electronic format to submit the survey results by E-mail, that will also work. We believe that both methods will save not only departmental staff time, but the third party sanitary surveyor inspectors' time in completing and submitting the completed forms in a timely manner.

What is the "enhancement" of the forms that we are working on? The existing sanitary survey forms do a very good job on assessing the technical capacity of a public water system but not the managerial and financial capacity. We have taken the CAB recommendations and included them in the new sanitary survey form. Working with representatives of the Regulatory Commission of Alaska, the Alaska National Rural Water Association, the Rural Utility Business Advisor Program, the Environmental Tech Program, and the Environmental Finance Center, we have developed a very complete

sanitary survey form that includes the basic TMF requirements for a PWS.

Currently, selected individuals are field testing the new electronic format of the sanitary survey forms. Comments received from this field testing will be used to develop improvements to the new forms. The new sanitary survey forms will be included in the State Drinking Water Regulations and are expected to be out for public comments within the next three months.

Based on the comments that we have already received on the questions relating to managerial and financial capacity, the Department will be holding workshops at central locations around the state on how to complete all sections of the enhanced survey forms. We are accepting comments on how the questions and/or format of the existing survey forms could be improved until the end of October 2001. We wish to thank everyone that has provided comments on the sanitary survey forms over the years.

If you would like to obtain copies of the existing sanitary survey forms, the "Report of Findings", the State of Alaska's Strategy for Improving the Technical, Managerial, and Financial Capacity of Class A Public Drinking Water Systems, or the Capacity Development Self Assessment Guide for Class A Public Water Systems, please contact Keven Kleweno at (907) 269-7696 or at:

Keven_Kleweno@envircon.state.ak.us

This letter highlights how Remote Maintenance Workers from ADEC and Native Health Corporations have helped one of Alaska's Public Drinking Water Systems.

"I wanted to take this opportunity to send you this letter of appreciation and thank you for the support service that you and the Remote Maintenance Worker program of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation have provided to the Akiak Native Community's Water Treatment Plant and our two Water Treatment Plant Operators. As you may be aware the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in the past year have completed the construction of the Akiak Treatment Plant and have given us the authority to operate the water treatment plant since November 2000 although the water service was limited to the Community Center Building, Akiak Schools, and the village clinic. Once the Akiak Water and Sewer Project is completed in the next two years, we will assume full responsibility for the full operation and maintenance of the Akiak Water Treatment Plant.

We are very fortunate to have on staff, two dedicated Water Treatment Plant Operators, Richard Ivan and Nelson Lliaban who have taken on the responsibility on our behalf of insuring the operation of the water facility and insuring water is provided to the three existing facilities. We thank you for your personal interest in making sure our two operators have been included in water treatment plant training for the last three years and have personally given them encouragement and strength to continue on with their training program provided by your office and Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Please continue to show your personal and professional interest in two Water Treatment Plant Operators in completing all the upcoming training requirements to be able to operate our water treatment plant successfully.

Although our two water treatment plant operators are dedicated to successfully operating our water treatment plant, they encountered problems in producing water in several occasions that I would like to point out. In most cases, Richard Ivan had to call you at your home even on Sunday's to ask for technical guidance in resolving low production of water and replacement of parts. I would like to point out one recent occasion when you were asked by our water operators to come personally and assist in figuring out what the problems were for low productions of water. On Sunday, July 22, 2001, when Richard Ivan could not get the water production going, you personally came in by an airplane and worked with him until the water treatment plant was in operation and producing water that took all day and into half a night. We appreciate this type of support from you that have been provided without complaints from you for calling you even at home and during evenings. Please thank Mr. Henry Kohl of your RMW section for us who was also recently in our village on July 30, 2001 and provided technical assistance in adjustment of chemicals to insure the faster production of water. Since then our water operators have told me that the water produced have been crystal clear. They are happy and appreciative of your continued help and interest in their successful operation of the water treatment plant.

Please pass this letter of appreciation to your supervisors and other interested parties from our community. We have called for your help at all hours of the day, even at your house be it a workday or a weekend. Please forgive us for calling you at home and we will try to contact you on your regular working hours at your office. Thank you for being patient with us and our water treatment plant operators in providing much needed technical assistance in properly operating our treatment plant. Our operators are continually learning and gaining confidence and our calls to you for help will diminish.

In closing, we thank you for your continued help and technical assistance and wish you well in your good work. Please inform your RMW section co-workers of our appreciation for you and their technical assistance.

Sincerely, - ANDREW JASPER, CHIEF

Message from the Manager Continued

Rule by collecting information to see what are the radon levels in drinking water across the state. This past summer, we initiated a random sampling program for approximately 10% of our Class A PWS. Sixty public water systems across the state were chosen, but the selection criteria favored areas of known or suspected high radon in ground water and with quick accessibility to a road and local airport. The latter criterion was important because we had to use an out-of-state lab (no in-state lab currently has the ability to test for radon) and the samples had to be collected, shipped, received, and analyzed in 3 to 5 days. To date, 49 samples out of the initially planned 60 have been analyzed. Of those analyzed, no PWS exceeded the proposed 4000 pCi/L limit, however, 8 sample results exceeded the proposed prescriptive MCL of 300 pCi/L. It is not too late for those PWS that were sent an information letter or a sampling kit and didn't submit a sample, to collect a sample and send it in to the contract lab. We encourage you to do so in order that we will have the best information we can on implementing this Rule.

If you have any questions about the radon information letter or the sample kit you received, please contact your local ADEC DW/WW Program Office. For additional information and to find out more about this new proposed federal rule, please check the EPA Website:

ADEC continues to work on other new Rules, including the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule and Disinfection/Disinfectants By-Products Rule Phase I, which the state must adopt by October 2001. We are currently working on the

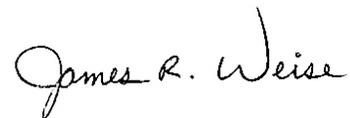
Administrative Penalty regulations and plan to begin working on the adoption by reference of the Lead and Copper Rule minor revisions, the Filter Backwash Rule, and the Variance and Exemption Rule. The Variance and Exemption Rule was finalized and published by U.S. EPA in the *Federal Register* in August 1998, and the Filter Backwash Rule was finalized and published in the *Federal Register* on June 8, 2001.

The source water assessment process for Alaska's Class A and B systems is proceeding along in a steady manner. The delineation's and contaminant source inventories for the 154 PWS sources in the Anchorage Bowl area are completed. Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) staff is in the process of writing reports for these PWS assessments. In order to ensure completion of the State's 1,800+ source water assessments by June 30, 2003, we have issued contracts with four engineering consulting firms. Those firms are: B.E.S.T Resource; Ecology and Environment, Inc.; URS Corporation, and Shannon and Wilson, Inc.

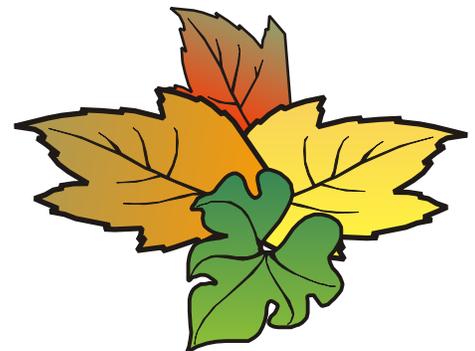
Staffing within the DW/WW Program continues to be dynamic. Since the last newsletter, Spring 2001, we have hired 5 new staff: Suzan Hill, DWPP Coordinator; Chris Miller and Sarah Bendewald, Hydrogeologists in the Drinking Water Protection Program, Anchorage Office; Carrie McMullen, Environmental Specialist in the Juneau Office; and Nancy Horan, Administrative Clerk in the Soldotna Office. Also, since the last newsletter, we have lost two staff from the DW/WW Program - Clay Bates and Susan Randlett. Clay accepted new employment opportunities outside of the ADEC and we wish him the best.

Susan transferred from the Division of Environmental Health, DW/WW Program, to the Division of Facility Construction and Operation, Municipal Grants and Loans Program. We are completing recruitment for the South-central DW/WW Program Coordinator, Anchorage Office and hope to have that vacancy filled by early October 2001. After that, we plan to begin recruitment to fill the statewide Compliance/Enforcement Coordinator's position, Susan Randlett's vacancy.

Enjoy the fall colors, the crisp morning breezes, and the smells of low bush cranberries and rose hips as we hustle through our busy days. If you have any thoughts or comments about the "new" approach in my "Message from the Manager", please let me know. E-mail your comments to me at the address below or call (907) 269-7647.



Manager,
DW/WW Program
James_Weise@envircon.state.ak.us



Changes to The Revolving Loan Fund Regulations

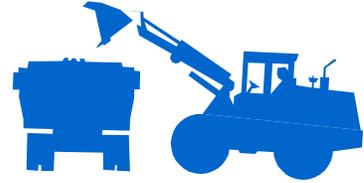
ADEC is in the process of amending its Revolving Loan Fund regulations. As a result of legislative changes made in state statutes, ADEC will modify the eligibility of the program to allow certain privately-owned drinking water systems to receive financial assistance. The financial assistance would be in the form of **construction loans** for new drinking water projects or upgrades to

existing drinking water systems.

The legislation specified that these loans could be made starting **July 1, 2002**. Only those privately owned Public Water Systems that are economically regulated and have a Certificate to Operate from the Regulatory Commission of Alaska would be eligible to receive assistance.

If you have any questions you can contact Mike Burns, Division of Facility

Construction and Operation, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; by fax at: (907) 269-7509, or by E-mail at: Mike_Burns@envircon.state.ak.us ~



Operator of the Year!

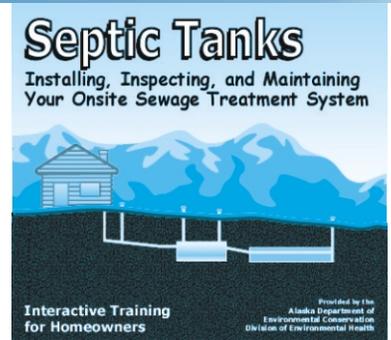
Congratulations to Jose Rubio who was selected as "Operator of the Year" at the AWWMA/AWWA Conference held in Anchorage during April 2001. The City of Cordova also won "Large Water System of the Year." Lynn Lowman of ADEC says "Jose is a great operator as well as a wonderful person. He works with a great team in Cordova. With all the improvements that have been made on the water system in Cordova, the award was well deserved." ~

CD That Explains How to Install and Maintain Septic Systems Now Available!

Do you own a septic system or are you planning on putting one in? ADEC has a new CD that trains homeowners to install, inspect, and maintain septic systems available for free.

You can have a copy of the CD mailed to you by contacting Margaret French at (907) 262-5210, ext. 223 or E-mail her at:

Margaret_French@envircon.state.ak.us ~



New Filter Backwash Rule

EPA has approved the Filter Backwash Rule. A fact sheet related to the final rule is available at:

http://www.epa.gov/safewater/mdbp/fbrr_factsheet.html

This Rule will require Public Water Systems to notify the state about their recycling of filter backwash, supernatant, etc. It will be another monitoring and reporting requirement for Public Water System's that use filtration systems with backwash. These are typically the larger systems using conventional treatment.

State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation
 Division of Environmental Health
 Drinking Water and Wastewater Program
 555 Cordova St.
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Important Information



For Water Operators and Owners

Northern Flows

DW/WW Program Directory

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