

Groundwater Protection Water Well Stakeholder Meeting Minutes

Schedule: 4:00-6:00pm (Actual: about 4:15-6:15pm)

DATE: 10/16/2012

Location: Noel Wien Library 1215 Cowles St. Fairbanks, AK

Host: SOA DEC

PRESENT		
Kathy Kastens (DEC)	Robert Hopkins (Eielson AFB Water Plant)	Dean Golden
Charley Palmer (DEC)	Joseph Wenzel	Lee Johnson (DEC)
Chris Miller (DEC)	Cary (Gary?) Spaulding (?)	Jeff Adams (Homeowner)
Roy Robertson (DEC)	Lee Ice (Well Driller)	Brittany Russell (DOT)
Jim Vohden (DNR)	Chuck Ice (Well Driller)	John Craven (CWS)
Melissa Hill (DNR)	Carolyn Curley (DNR)	
Rebecca Baril (DEC)	Katrina LeMieux (DOT)	
Gary Taube (Well Driller)	Rocky MacDonald (Well Driller)	

MINUTES BY: Rebecca Baril (DEC)

FACILITATOR: Kathy Kastens (DEC)

PRESENTORS: Charley Palmer (DEC); Roy Robertson (DEC); Roy Ireland (DNR)

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	COMMENT
Presentations	Kathy opens the meeting with introductions, Description of DEC, DOL&WD, DNR roles, and an overview of the meeting structure and agenda.	
	Charley presents groundwater use, basic groundwater hydrology, well logs, well constructions standards statewide, well construction aspects, sanitary survey inspections and unresolved deficiencies, and abandoned wells.	
	Roy (DEC) presents engineering plan reviews, Groundwater Under the Direct Influence of Surface Water (GWUDISW; "gweedy") wells requiring surface water treatment, separation distances, common water well and groundwater protection issues.	
	Roy (DNR) presents DNR roles, and the WELTS (well log tracking system).	
General Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I find a trustworthy well driller? Is there a list somewhere? 	There is no state-recognized list of recommended well drillers. There is also no state-recognized certification program. Some well drillers are members of the Alaska Water Well Association (AWWA) or certified through the National Groundwater Association (NGWA), which may be a good starting place.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many problems do you hear about? Documented issues? 	<p>The state noted several issues, and presented pictures both on posters and in slideshows for this meeting. We will continue to document the issues as they arise, but ask that those in attendance also send the state documentation on issues they are aware of. It is also noted that we do not want to “wait” until already known issues are “documented” to start the discussion process on what/where we should go from here. As we document the issues they will need to be prioritized, but it is our intent to involve stakeholders in the prioritization process. We do not want to drive priorities without stakeholder input.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a private citizen that would want to buy a house, where would I go to get information about my well that is good enough for the bank (lending institution)? 	<p>The state does not approve private wells. You can get a well log from the drilling contractor and can hire an engineer to inspect the well and provide a letter to the lender. A potential issue here is that there are no statewide well construction standards to reference during an inspection. Some lenders have minimum standards that they are looking for, but this information has not been made available publically that we are aware of.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment/question: Some older wells were drilled before addresses were established, leads to a lot of wells that will just not have any information. 	<p>Possible that the new WELTS web map format will allow one to be able to provide accurate locations for existing wells.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are updates made to wells that are repaired on WELTS? 	<p>Yes, well logs are amended or are redone when information is available.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the state willing to start a well driller certification program? 	<p>It has been a consideration. But the goal of these meetings is to only move in the direction the stakeholders want to move. If that becomes an item of interest we can pursue it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if electrical and plumbing is being done up to code, even if the installer isn’t licensed? 	<p>From DOL&WD: It is a Public Safety issue, those licenses provide protection for the installer and the consumer. There are standards in electrical and plumbing that need to be upheld.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about issues that aren't due to the well driller – such as a customer building on property without any idea of the history or what is on the land? 	Having statewide standards could help reduce this issue.
General Discussions (and questions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on the difficulty of having statewide standards with regional differences. Example of Fairbanks: artesian, hillside, floodplain, permafrost, etc. What is meant by “standards” – two types, geological and surface construction? 	Concern recognized by the State, and would need to be addressed if statewide standards were to be developed. A large portion of our standards we are considering are dealing with surface construction issues; casing stick-up, sloping for drainage, subsurface grout seal. But, minimum standards could possibly be developed to account for regional geological differences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From driller: The only person who knows what's in the ground is the well driller. So how would an inspector know what's in the ground? 	The state agreed, but re-emphasized that this is a reason why ensuring proper knowledge, skills, and abilities are obtained by all well drillers, and that adequate information is recorded on a well log and submitted for public record.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on the need for standards to be accessible and understandable to the lay person. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion that a driller just needs to have a general or specialty contractor's license, and not be a licensed well driller. Doesn't assure knowledge, skills, and abilities have been obtained. 	Comment from audience that well driller can work with a specialty contractor's license, not just a general contractor's license.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion that wells can dry up but local experienced well-drillers will know when to drill and what to look for to potentially avoid this. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion that banks (lending institutions) set well construction standards, but their approval is based on an engineer's report and their opinion. 	There may be differences in what the banks or lending institutions want to see or use as a minimum, for example the VA has very minimal requirements. It is unclear how an engineer would obtain adequate information to offer an opinion and has no state-recognized standards to reference.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment from the state about missing well logs. If the state doesn't have a document telling them, they have to make a conservative assumption. 	Comment made for a voluntary program for well info submittals by homeowners or well drillers that have the information.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on looking up well drillers on NGWA (National Groundwater Association) certified list. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vote was conducted, the stakeholders in attendance unanimously agreed that there are valid issues that need to be addressed. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members in attendance requested if the state could put together some documented issues to share with stakeholders to confirm and bring awareness to the perceived issues. • Request from stakeholders for the state to put together the list of issues and show their perceived ranking of severity. Possibly also submit list to stakeholders to allow them to rank. 	<p>The state did not disagree, but stated that it did not want to dictate the issues, and that the reason for these meetings was to get stakeholders involved in the process. The well drillers have intimate knowledge of issues in the field, and could also offer some assistance identifying and prioritizing issues. The state felt that this is a good starting point for future stakeholder's meetings. For stakeholder to assist in ranking, an equally distributed cross-section of stakeholders would ensure that the ranking would not be biased by any one group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of electrical and plumbing being done without proper licensing. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request that the state make training materials and information easier to find. 	<p>There is training materials currently available, for example, those available on the NGWA web site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of self-regulation by AWWA. Comment that there are some drillers not a part of the group. Stakeholders mentioned that a good professional will become part of an organization, builds a reputation, and relies on word of mouth to stay in business. 	<p>State commented that some issues are not immediately apparent and are seemingly "smaller", and may not become a problem until sometime down the road. These small issues are likely not something that could readily be self-regulated by the AWWA, or by general reputation.</p> <p>The example was brought up of the one well driller that AWWA was able to coordinate with agencies to effectively remove from service due to improper well construction.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments made indicating the desire to not have excessive regulation by the state. 	<p>State agreed and said that this was also mentioned at the previous two meetings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments made that "rogue" drillers are eventually squeezed out. 	<p>Concerns voiced that several well owners may be impacted before the "rogue" driller is driven out of</p>

	business by poor reputation or AWWA and agency pressure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of “voluntary certification” was brought up by the state. 	Private citizens voiced their interest in this, as it allows them to find a driller that they can believe is well-qualified, safe, and trustworthy. Some drillers voiced their concern as to having a certification.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments made regarding the lack of collaboration between various entities dealing with a wells and property owners, like the engineer, installers, drillers, agencies, etc. Developing a process to build better communication between various entities was mentioned as a good way to address some of the issues presented. 	The state agreed and thinks that stakeholder work groups would be a good forum to bring together different entities and identify areas where collaboration could be improved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment made by a private citizen that they have hired contractors to complete various types of work at home, and has had to go back and have work redone. Point being made was that just a contractor’s license does not adequately ensure quality work. 	