

Groundwater Protection Water Well Stakeholder Meeting Minutes

Schedule: 4:00-6:00pm (Actual: about 4:10-6:30pm)

DATE: 10/15/2012

Location: MAT-SU STATION 61 101 W. SWANSON AVE. WASILLA, AK

Host: SOA DEC

PRESENT		
Kathy Kastens (DEC)	Mille Wolf (private citizen)	Brughilde O'Brien (private citizen)
Charley Palmer (DEC)	George Shriner (private citizen)	Larry Swihart (driller)
Chris Miller (DEC)	Fred Sorenson (UAF)	Ron Godden (Alaska Rim Eng.)
Roy Robertson (DEC)	Shane Durand (private citizen)	Mark D. Lee (private citizen)
Roy Ireland (DNR)	Anne Winckler (private citizen)	Dave Bay (pump and well services)
Melissa Hill (DNR)	James Meyers (private citizen)	Thomas McAleer (TNC Water system Owner)
Rebecca Baril (DEC)	Robert McCall (private citizen)	Brian Walsh (private)
Milo & Kim Pitner (Drillers)	Dane Shaver (City of Palmer)	Emerson Krueger (local gov. private citizen)
Ted Schacle (driller)	Craig Seime (driller)	Daniel K. Shaw (private citizen)

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"> Question on how to tell the difference between an improperly abandoned well and an old sign post etc.? Comment/observation that they can look very similar. 	There is no good way to tell without checking the depth to see if there is water or how far it goes, but either way it still poses a risk being an open hole in the ground, in effect reducing any natural soil buffer.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any regulation resources on properly decommissioning a well? 	DEC Regulations 18 AAC 80.015(e) adopts by reference the ANSI/AWWA Standard A100-97, <i>Water</i>

		<p><i>Wells</i> [Section 4.10 is relevant], and Appendix H to A100-97. This publication describes general decommissioning procedures for varying conditions. Unfortunately, it is copyright-protected, but can be purchased for a relatively low cost.</p> <p>DNR and DEC have developed a Water Well Record Decommissioning Form that identifies key aspects of the decommissioning process that should be recorded and submitted to DNR.</p> <p>DEC Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) has a Monitoring Well Guidance (2011) that identifies decommissioning procedures for monitoring wells associated with contaminated sites.</p> <p>The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) has specific requirements for well decommissioning spelled out in their Chapter 15.55 Water Wells Code.</p> <p>Attendees were directed to handouts available at the meeting, including the Wisconsin DNR Well Abandonment (a.k.a. Well Decommissioning) guide.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many improperly abandoned wells are there? 	<p>We do not have an accurate estimate at this time, mainly due to the lack of reporting requirements and awareness that they could pose a risk to drinking water supplies.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does WELTS have historical data? 	<p>Currently 35,000 well logs being processed, but some are not even applicable anymore. Trying to update the accuracy of the current data. A lot of bookkeeping information in the WELTS system and old data will be transferred, but not all well logs are complete with all the information needed. The requirement to submit well logs was not in place until about 1992.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be lat/long for septic systems that are being installed? 	<p>Not currently coordinated or regulated, something we are aiming for down the road. Locations may be provided in paper form to DEC On-Site Program, but these data are not available digitally.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All septic systems information goes to DEC, so are the agencies not talking to each other for location information? 	<p>DEC Drinking Water Program has compiled a GIS database of septic system locations inferred by parcel value and type, but it is not accurate to a level that can be used for separation distance evaluations.</p> <p>It really is a matter of resources as far as creating an accurate GIS database statewide.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question on first issue (about standards): Referring to private or public systems? 	<p>Majority of the wells are private. There are no statewide construction standards for public and private. DEC DW Program regulations reference standards for Public wells but not private ones.</p> <p>Comments from the state: We don't have the resources to regulate the private sector at this current time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the state looking for from this meeting? 	<p>We want to know if the public and the stakeholders believe that the issues we've identified are valid and if there are others from stakeholders, and if valid, how to move forward.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a private citizen, how is one to know who is a trustworthy well driller who will do it safe and properly? 	<p>Public answer: Better business bureau, AWWA, NGWA. Those are the main resources, but there is no real way to know, there is no list or anything that says who has what experience, knowledge etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any protection provided for someone whose well becomes negatively affected by a nearby gravel pit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One attendee asked if the state had any knowledge of well replacement protection provided for purchase from the Borough that would replace a compromised well. 	<p>The state was not aware of any well replacement protection provided by the Borough.</p> <p>With respect to protection from gravel pits, the Borough has an ordinance that prescribes standards for a gravel pit activities.</p> <p>Comment from an unidentified industry representative that gravel pit owners are testing and sampling to monitor groundwater.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No well-understood definition of well standards for when a client puts together a contract for bidding. May ask for one type of well, which the drillers bid on based on that, then find out that they need a different type (i.e. local governments and even state projects have poor “scopes”; private well that becomes a public well). 	<p>This is one issue that the state has pointed out, but from a different perspective, there is no way to calculate the bid properly if the scope of the project is wrong. State feels this perspective also needs to be addressed.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do dry and test wells need to submit well logs? 	<p>Technically yes, any water well type is supposed to submit a well log.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a way to identify or find contaminated areas nearby when drilling? 	<p>Directed to DEC Drinking Water Protection web map that has drinking water protection areas for PWS wells (and intakes) and DEC Contaminated Sites layers.</p>
General Discussions (and questions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is funding available for properly decommissioning abandoned wells? 	<p>DEC Drinking Water Program had a small amount of grant money (<\$20,000) available in the past for projects related to drinking [source] water protection, and one project did use some of the money to decommission some abandoned water wells. This money is not available at this time.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEC Engineer’s presentation brought up the point that some wells are being completed just a few feet into the aquifer, and subsequently drying up during peak use periods, or as more users draw down the aquifer. Comment from a well drilling representative mentioned that this is usually because the well owner does not want to continue paying for drilling once sufficient water has been found. 	<p>State mentioned that this is a good time to contact the DEC Drinking Water Engineer when it is for a public water system, because we may have information that indicates drilling deeper would help ensure a sustainable public water supply.</p> <p>Comment from well drilling representative was that this is something that they would need a quick decision on because they cannot sit on site waiting for the state to let the well owner know that drilling deeper would be beneficial.</p> <p>State mentioned that this is one reason why having statewide standards might offer a mechanism to ensure that the drilling client understands potential issues relating to partial penetration of the aquifer.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on bringing septic system locations along with well locations. 	<p>The state views this as an important priority for future development of the programs. The septics installed are involved with the Division of Water.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief that the well drillers are self-regulated by the AWWA (Alaska Water Well Association). AWWA involves the authorities and utilizes other actions in order to keep a bad driller from continuing. 	<p>Comment from the public and state about concern regarding drillers that aren't members of AWWA. There were comments that this might not be good enough (from private citizen) as well as that there are no written policy or process on how the AWWA would "regulate" its own members (or nonmembers)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the state: There are some regulations that we have no power to enforce. Or there are examples of an old well from a residence (private well) that has since been upgraded to be used for a restaurant (now a public water system well). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion that there is some regulation of private wells from banks and financial institutions that require certain distances for financing. 	<p>Comment was made from public that they regulate a depth and a flow rate (gallons per minute), but there was some discrepancy about what the minimum acceptable flow rate was, and there is no record of documentation of this process. Comment was made that banks (lending institutions) look for a letter from an engineer, but the engineer may not have adequate information or any standard to refer to.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment on the lack of regulation of backflow prevention which can cause a large problem with contamination into a public water system; an example was given regarding unsupervised/unauthorized hookups to fire flow access points. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on need for regulation for dog lots/livestock. Comment was brought up of a local business dumping oil. 	<p>Led to comment by state that regulation is a double edge sword, it gives the driller power as well to make sure the well goes in properly (ie client cant short cut the process because it would be cheaper or more convenient for them).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion that there is no standardized experience or education (knowledge) needed to become a well driller, just need to have a general or specialty contractor's license. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed issue of electrical work being done by well drillers, comment was made that the pump installer and the well driller are sometimes two different people. 	<p>It was agreed that although that could be the way wells are constructed and installed, it usually done by the well driller.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comment was made that many well drillers are afraid of regulations coming into place mimicking the regulation on wells in Anchorage. Long list of regulations and standards.	State is looking for an effective solution, which could be a regulation, but not necessarily. It understands that whatever the result of stakeholder input, it would likely be a simple solution.
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