

# Northern Flows



Alaska's Drinking Water Program Newsletter

Issue 39 • Spring 2010

## Site Visits *By Cindy Christian*

In this edition of *Northern Flows*, we would like to review and explain several types of site visits that could bring Drinking Water (DW) Program staff to your water treatment plant. This explanation is to help you prepare for potential visits as well as to let you know what to expect when a site visit is scheduled for your system.

The most common reason for a site visit by a DW Program staff member is for a routine sanitary survey inspection. All community water systems (CWS), non-transient non-community (NTNC) and transient non-community (TNC) water systems are required to have a sanitary survey inspection every three to five years. (Please consult your latest annual monitoring summary to see when your next sanitary survey inspection is due.) A periodic sanitary survey inspection is required by the Total Coliform Rule and is done to determine if a public water system has any deficiencies that might pose a

public health threat to the people drinking the water being distributed by the system. Most DW Program Environmental Program Specialists and Environmental Engineers are approved sanitary survey inspectors. When your system is due for a sanitary survey, the Sanitary Survey Inspector will contact the owner or operator of the system to schedule a convenient inspection date. Prior to arriving on site, the Sanitary Survey Inspector will review the public water system file. Information from previous sanitary surveys will be reviewed to determine if there were any significant deficiencies in the last survey that have not been adequately addressed and to look at the contaminant monitoring history of the system. When the Sanitary Survey Inspector arrives on-site, he or she will begin the survey by meeting all of the personnel available (operator, owner, administrative staff, utility supervisor, etc.) and explain the process of the survey. The State of Alaska sanitary survey covers the eight essential elements required by EPA: source, treatment, distribution system, finished water storage, pumps and pump facilities, monitoring and reporting, system management and operation, and operator certification. Typically, the inspector will begin by reviewing inventory information on the system, such as legal ownership, primary water source, population served, emergency contacts, and looking at any recent modifications that may have been done to the system. The inspector will then review

all of the required records. Public water systems are required to keep certain records on-site for inspection during the sanitary survey, such as operator reports and contaminant monitoring results. For a complete list of the records required, please see the Drinking Water Regulations, 18 AAC 80. It is important to have all of your records available for review by the Sanitary Survey Inspector. It saves time for all involved if those records are pulled and organized together before the inspector arrives on site. Once the inspector has reviewed all of the required records, he or she will then begin the inspection of the entire system, beginning with the source and continuing through the entire distribution system. It is important that either the operator or owner be present during the survey to answer any questions that the Sanitary Survey Inspector might have. After the survey is completed, the inspector will identify and review any significant deficiencies that were observed during the survey. Significant deficiencies must be corrected according to a timeline dependent on the severity of the deficiency. The Sanitary Survey Inspector will review this information with the owner or operator and notify them of the timeline for any corrective actions that are necessary.

Another on-site inspection that may bring a DW Program staff to your water system is the filtration avoidance inspection. There are currently eight CWSs that avoid filtration in Alaska. One of the requirements for *(Cont. on page 7)*

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## Message from the Manager *By James Weise*

Spring is here, as well as some migratory waterfowl such as Canada geese and swans to herald its arrival. How quickly the scenery changes with the longer daylight hours and warmer temperatures. Let's take advantage of the situation to catch up on some overdue activities for our water systems, such as maintenance, operator training, compliance monitoring, and scheduling your sanitary survey. This is a good break between the winter and summer where we (state regulatory staff, technical assistance providers, and public water system owners and operators) have a chance to effectively plan for our short and very busy summer.

This past fall, and during our long, cold, and dark winter, DEC Drinking Water (DW) Program staff were very busy with several significant projects. The DW Program and

Environmental Health (EH) Laboratory awarded four contracts: three using Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and one using a multi-phased Task Order. In total, \$814,600 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) "Economic Stimulus" funds are being used for non-construction-related drinking water projects. These projects will provide better overall customer service to water system owners and operators, certified laboratories, and consulting engineers.

For the specific DW Program projects, a regulatory engineering contract was awarded to the *Boutet Company, Inc.*, for assistance with developing implementation guidance for the State for the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule, and an engineering technical services contract was awarded to

*Katmai Engineering* for assistance in documenting Alaska public water system Approvals (Construction and Operation) and As-builts. A multi-phased Task Order contract was awarded to *Applied Microsystems, Inc.* for beginning a statewide Alaska PWS files scanning, digitizing, and cataloging project. The EH Laboratory awarded a contract to *Lab Answer* working with *Alpha Engineering* for development of their LIMS Data Base for the management and statewide accessibility of DEC-certified laboratories' PWS data. The overall focus for use of the ARRA "Economic Stimulus" funds by the Drinking Water Program and EH Laboratory is to better inform and assist Alaska PWS owners and operators, consultants, technical assistance providers, DEC-certified laboratories, and the general public on the quality of

*(Cont. on page 6)*

## What's Wrong With This Picture? *By Scott Forque*

### *What's wrong with this picture?*



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

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

### Answer

Rather than ask: "What's wrong with this picture?" let's ask: "How many things are wrong in this picture?"

Start with the apparent threats to drinking water quality and public health. The well casing lacks sufficient stickup above the surrounding ground. The Drinking Water Regulations require a well casing terminate at least one foot above ground level (18 AAC 80.015). The same regulation requires that for at least 10 feet in all directions around the well, the surface must be sloped or contoured to drain away from the well. These requirements help protect the water system, the well, and the subsurface

aquifer from contamination resulting from surface drainage entering the well casing or being conducted downward along the outside of the casing.

**NOTE:** The vast majority of the public drinking water systems in the State of Alaska use groundwater as the source, and certain activities have significant potential to impact groundwater quality. Once groundwater quality is degraded, cleanup or treatment to meet drinking water quality standards is usually costly. Source water protection is definitely an area where "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Now consider the safety concerns associated with the well pump

wiring being exposed. The wiring needs to be in conduit to protect it from being chafed or broken. The hole in the well cap that the pump wiring enters may also allow contamination to enter the well.

The pump discharge water line comes out of the well through the cap and runs on the surface of the ground. This exposes the line to potential damage including pulling the plastic line from the metal fitting.

Is there anything else wrong in this picture? If you find anything else wrong or have a picture that you would like to see in "What's Wrong With This Picture?",

please contact Scott Forgue at: [Scott.Forgue@alaska.gov](mailto: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 continue to work on completing Source Water Assessments (SWA) for new community water systems (CWS) and non-community water systems, and new sources used for drinking water for existing systems. DWP staff also continue to strive towards verifying the information included in existing SWAs through field visits whenever possible, usually in conjunction with workshops and other travel opportunities. If your community feels that your SWA needs updating,

verification, or corrections, please contact us.

#### Drinking Water Protection Plans

DWP staff have recently increased their efforts in on-site assistance for developing drinking water protection plans, and are working closely with the Source Water Protection Specialists from the Alaska Rural Water Association (ARWA). The plans generated from these visits, if implemented, will qualify as an *endorsed* drinking water protection plan. Remember, having an *endorsed* protection plan may help build your grant application portfolio! To understand *endorsed* protection plans, please visit: →

If your community needs assistance in developing a drinking water source protection plan, please contact us.

#### Drinking Water Protection Grant

Applications for this year's Drinking Water Protection grant, administered through the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) grant process, have been received and are currently under review. An award announcement should be made before July 1<sup>st</sup> and grant money will be allocated after July 1<sup>st</sup>. Projects submitted this year include:

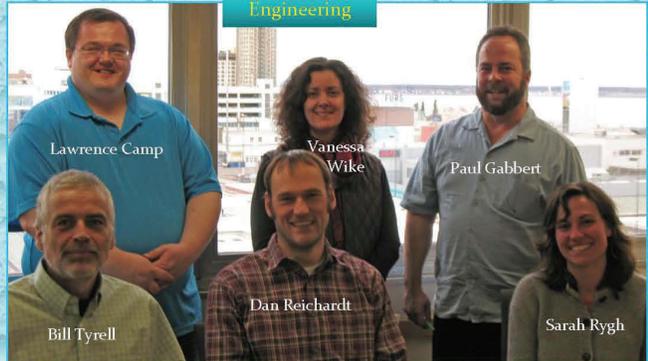
- Abandoned well decommissioning and community outreach;
- Informational kiosk at entrance to watershed; and
- Website/Outreach for homes within a watershed.

[http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/dw/DWP/endorsed\\_plans.html](http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/dw/DWP/endorsed_plans.html)

(Cont. on page 6)

## Anchorage Drinking Water Program Staff

### Anchorage DEC Drinking Water Program staff



### Statewide Technical Services (STS)



Safe,  
Healthy  
Water!

## AWWMA CONFERENCE

50th ANNUAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW, MAY 4 - 6, 2010  
Centennial Hall, Sitka, Alaska

### 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 the Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association, or to register for this conference or future conferences, please visit the AWWMA website at: <http://awwma.org/>

## Drinking Water Protection Site Visits *By Chris Miller*

**S**taff from the Drinking Water Protection (DWP) group of the Drinking Water Program make regular visits to public drinking water systems throughout the year and throughout the state. Below are some of the reasons DWP staff may be visiting your system soon.

### **Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC) of Source Water Assessment Reports**

Since 2001, DWP staff have been completing Source Water Assessment (SWA) reports for public water systems throughout the State. While significant effort was initially made to assure the accuracy of the SWA Reports, occasionally the database identifying well locations and potential sources of contamination was inaccurate. The intent of QA/QC site visits is to improve the accuracy of our DWP GIS database by conducting field visits. Observations made in the field are immediately incorporated into the GIS database maintained by Drinking Water Protection staff. Ultimately these visits will improve the communication with DEC DWP staff and public water system owners and may lead to revisions of a water

systems' SWA Report.

QA/QC visits will occur primarily during the snow-free months for reasons of accessibility to the area and visibility of activities within the delineated protection areas.



### **Developing Drinking Water Protection Plans**

Drinking Water Protection Plans are one way for water systems to proactively protect their source of drinking water from potential contamination. DEC DWP staff along with staff from the Alaska Rural Water Association can provide direct assistance to Community Water Systems wanting to develop an *endorsed* Drinking Water Protection Plan. Community Water Systems with *endorsed* Drinking Water Protection Plans become eligible for the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) grants that address

drinking water stewardship actions. The ACWA grants are solicited annually in January and funding can be used to help implement protection strategies identified in *endorsed* DWP Plans.

These visits occur throughout the year and may be combined with QA/QC field visits. Contact [Drinking Water Protection](#) if your system would like assistance developing a Plan.

### **Verifying the Implementation of Drinking Water Protection Plans**

Visits and/or phone calls will be made to Community and Non-Community Water Systems that have submitted *endorsed* DWP Plans to the Drinking Water Program. These visits will review protection strategies identified in the DWP Plan and verify that the strategies are being implemented. Verification helps assure that the water system's operator and owner remain *endorsed* and their protection plans eligible for grants and future incentives.

These visits/contacts occur throughout the year and may be combined with QA/QC field visits.

\* \* \*

### **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.

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

Alaska's drinking water and the status of Alaska PWS with Safe Drinking Water Act requirements.

Noted in the Fall/Winter 2009 Newsletter, Issue 38, DW Program Engineering staff began a significant public health protection focused and long-term compliance and capacity assessment project for Alaska's PWS using a surface water (SW) source, and also those systems using a groundwater under the direct influence of surface water (GWUDISW) source. This is our "Status Component Assessment Project." Engineering staff, working in teams, will complete on-site visits to all SW and GWUDISW systems over the next 20 – 24 months. During these on-site visits, staff will document system treatment status including filtration credits and disinfection credits. This information will be useful for the system and the State in documenting the systems' compliance with the Long Term 1 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT1) and more fully prepare the system for compliance with the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2). For additional information about this project,

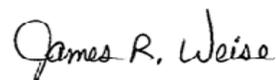
please see the article in this newsletter about **Status Component Inspections** written by Vanessa Wike.

Our proposed regulations covering DW Program fee increases, as well as EH Lab new fees, fee increases, and revised lab certification procedures, are being reviewed by Dept. of Law (DOL). We expect the DOL review to be completed by May 2010. After the DOL review, the fees regulations will be sent to the Lt. Governor's office and should become effective by early July, or sooner. After the fees regulations are in the Lt. Governor's office, we plan to post a public notice of the adoption by reference of the Stage 2 Disinfectants/Disinfection By-products Rule and the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule. For additional information about the planned regulations packages for SFY 2011, please check out the *Regulations Corner* article in this newsletter written by Gloria Collins. To better prepare PWS owners and operators for maintaining and sustaining compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act requirements, the DW Program is planning a "Sustained Compliance" workshop in

Anchorage in late September 2010 and in Fairbanks in early December 2010. Please check the summer issue of *Northern Flows*, Issue 40, for additional information on this workshop.

We are pleased to announce the following new staff hired over the past several months to the DEC DW Program. In the Anchorage office, Kelly Cobbs, Environmental Program Specialist in the Statewide Technical Services Section, and in the Wasilla office, Felicia "Anne" Gleason, Environmental Program Specialist in the Statewide Technical Services Section. If you have interest in working for the State of Alaska, Drinking Water Program, in a progressive and challenging job that could be the "career of a lifetime," please check Workplace Alaska recruitment notices for job postings in your area.

Enjoy our mild spring, and I hope to see some of you at the AWWMA conference in Sitka, AK this May.



James Weise  
Manager  
Drinking Water Program

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

We will remind readers prior to when the next grant cycle begins (January 2011) using the *Northern Flows*, so make sure to read the newsletter each quarter.

### **2008-2010 Synthetic Organic Chemical (SOC) Monitoring Waiver Applications**

The deadline for submitting the SOC Monitoring Waiver Application for the 2008-2010 Compliance Period

**was December 31, 2009.**

For those water systems that didn't apply for an SOC Monitoring Waiver or whose waiver was denied, initial sampling must have begun **before March 31, 2010**. Failure to do so will result in a monitoring violation.

If your water system has received an SOC Monitoring Waiver, please consider including this in your

## *By Charley Palmer*

annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR). Many states require public notification when applying for an SOC Monitoring Waiver. Public notification is not required in Alaska at this time; however, the option is currently being explored for the next SOC Waiver Compliance Period, beginning in 2011. Including this information in your CCR is a good starting point to assure that your customers are properly informed.

## Site Visits (cont.) *By Cindy Christian*

these systems is that they have an annual on-site inspection by DW Program staff. During that on-site inspection, the inspector will evaluate the system's compliance with the filtration avoidance criteria in 18 AAC 80.600 – 685. The inspector will look at the Watershed Control Program, source water quality, disinfection treatment system, equipment maintenance, and general operating procedures. Water systems that avoid filtration rely solely on disinfection to treat their surface water. As the term implies, these systems do not filter their source water as required by the Surface Water Treatment Rule. As a result, these systems must have a Watershed Control Program to control source water quality to ensure a low density (number) of fecal coliform or waterborne disease-causing organisms. Most surface water systems employ a double barrier approach of filtration and disinfection to make sure that waterborne disease-causing organisms are removed or inactivated. Since filtration avoidance systems only have a single barrier of disinfection, they must monitor source water to make sure fecal coliform density will not impact disinfection as well as to provide

redundant disinfection components to ensure continuous disinfection. The inspector will look closely at all components of the disinfection treatment equipment and review source water quality. The inspector will also extensively review all operating procedures to make sure that all components are in compliance with the filtration avoidance requirements. It is important that the operator or owner of the system be present during the filtration avoidance inspection to answer any questions and to provide required documentation to the inspector. The inspector will contact the system owner or operator to schedule the filtration avoidance inspection, and at that time, will inform the system of which records and documentation must be available for review.

The last type of on-site inspection discussed here is the Complaint Response Inspection. The most common types of complaints that we receive are water quality and water quantity complaints.

Typically, a consumer will call the DW Program when there are obvious water quality issues, such as discoloration, particulates or strong odors. Consumers also call when

they lose water pressure or do not have enough water to accommodate normal daily activities. For the most part, an Environmental Program Specialist or Engineer will contact the system owner or operator to discuss the problem and provide technical assistance to solve the problem. Occasionally, the problem will be severe enough to require an on-site visit from a DW Program staff. These types of on-site inspections are dependent on the specific conditions being responded to. In any case, the inspector will contact the system before showing up on-site. At that time, the inspector will let the operator or owner of the system know what he or she will need to look at when they arrive on-site.

All of these types of on-site inspections are important opportunities where both the DW Program staff and the water system operator or owner can take steps to ensure that the best possible drinking water is being provided to the consumer. On-site inspections are one of the best tools we have to protect public health, which is the mission of all drinking water professionals.

## On-Scene Assistance *By Leslie Shurtleff*

**D**rinking Water (DW) Program staff may visit a water system to provide emergency preparedness guidance or assist with certain incident response activities. An emergency response plan, or ERP, is the foundation of water system preparedness and is consequently a vital aspect of responsible system management. The DW Program recognizes that an

ERP allows a system to be proactive rather than reactive, and DW Program staff will provide on-scene assistance with the development and maintenance of an ERP. If interested in receiving guidance, contact the DEC DW Program Security Specialist at: (907) 269-8924. Additionally, in the aftermath of an incident which overwhelms a system's capacity to function and

recover in a timely manner, on-scene assistance may be provided to aid in emergency response measures. Technical assistance may include an evaluation of the system, the collection of samples, providing a disinfection process for wells, and establishing an approved treatment process to provide drinking water.

## Status Component Inspections

By Vanessa Wike

### Coming to a Surface Water Treatment System Near You ...

**D**oes your public water system meet the requirements of the new Long Term 2 Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2)? In April 2010, the DEC Drinking Water Program will begin conducting Status Component Inspections to help answer this question. The goal of these inspections is to provide public water treatment systems that have sources that are either surface water or groundwater under the direct influence of surface water (GWUDISW) with an assessment of their current operational status. Most importantly, this project will provide systems with a current assessment of the filtration credit and inactivation credit for their treatment system. This will help clarify the current status of the

treatment system and provide needed information for any future water treatment plant upgrades, modifications, or planned development that would affect treatment capacity and long-term sustainability.



Currently, there are approximately 200 Alaska public water systems treating surface water contaminants. Many of these systems are over 10 years old. Some are much older, predating the original Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR) which was finalized by EPA in 1989. After implementing the original SWTR, disease outbreaks and the related

increased concerns over potential public health issues resulted in needed updates to the rule. Instead of being implemented all at once, changes to the SWTR were spread out over the last decade. These amendments included the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (IESWTR, 1998), the Long Term 1 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT1, 2002), and finally the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2, finalized by EPA in 2006, DEC primacy expected in 2010).

Although the cumulative effect of these rules has increased public health protection, the long-term, incremental changes to treatment requirements and treatment objectives have resulted in some level of confusion with water treatment plant owners and operators on the current

*(Cont. on page 9)*

## Regulations Corner

By Gloria Collins

**A**s winter is changing to spring, the Drinking Water Regulations at 18 AAC 80 are getting ready for some changes. The proposed changes relating to Drinking Water Program fees and to the Environmental Health (EH) Laboratory certification program and fees are currently undergoing the final review before being signed and filed by the Lt. Governor. These proposed regulations will become effective 30 days after they are filed.

While several Drinking Water regulations revision projects are in the planning stages, one has moved into the drafting stage. That project is the adoption, before the end of this year, of two new federal rules, the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2) and the

Stage 2 Disinfectants/Disinfection Byproducts Rule (Stage 2). These rules, currently enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with our assistance, apply to surface water and GWUDISW systems.

A third federal rule on the adoption horizon is the Ground Water Rule (GWR); however, it may be next year before we complete the adoption process for this rule.

Regarding these three new federal rules, during the past four years the Drinking Water Program has held several regulatory workshops. And in 2009, we were able, for the first time, to bring a workshop to two cities, resulting in more people being able to attend. That workshop, on

the GWR, was held in Anchorage in September and Fairbanks in December.

Right now we are planning a workshop this fall that focuses, not so much on new federal rules, but on activities that a water system can do to remain in compliance with the many drinking water regulations. We are working towards offering this workshop in both Anchorage and Fairbanks, like we did with last year's GWR workshop.

Wishing you a pleasant transition to spring, and if you have questions on regulations, please direct them to Gloria Collins at: (907) 269-3075.

## Status Component Inspections (cont.) *By Vanessa Wike*

status of their treatment system. Many water treatments plants have gone through several upgrades to meet the requirements of these rules, but owners and operators may be unsure whether any further changes will be needed when Alaska adopts the LT2 Rule. Many owners and operators are unaware of the treatment credit options that are available under the LT2 Rule for systems that have met optimized performance standards. Many are also unaware of new process reporting requirements that apply to some of the newer treatment technologies.

One of the primary objectives of LT2 is to provide a flexible solution to attain treatment goals. The LT2 Rule tailors solutions and technical guidance to each specific treatment method and how that relates to a specific raw water quality for a system. To provide the needed specific technical assistance, over the next few years DEC DW Program staff will be inspecting all of the public water systems treating for surface water. Conducting these on-site inspections and having the opportunity to discuss the technical ramifications of the rules with the water treatment plant owners and

operators will enable DEC to provide accurate technical guidance on the system's current status with respect to the surface water treatment requirements and where they will need to be in the foreseeable future.

After completing the inspections, DW Program staff will be sending status letters to the owners and operators to assist them in their ongoing planning needs for the community. DEC will also be publishing statistical summaries on our web site and will be providing ongoing updates in future newsletters.

# Northern Flows

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