

Wellhead Protection Partnership Meeting Notes
March 18, 2002
I-80 Holiday Inn, Grand Island

I. Welcome

Rachael Herpel of The Groundwater Foundation hosted the meeting. The meeting was held in conjunction with a groundwater workshop held earlier in the day.

Meeting attendees included: Shelly Tislerics, AmeriCorps; Barb Beed, AmeriCorps; Sandy Patton, AmeriCorps; Nathan Eidem, AmeriCorps; Deana Kelley, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ); Elbert Traylor; NDEQ; Marlene Rasmussen, City of Litchfield; Christy Karnes, Upper Republican NRD; Dennis Kahl, Seward County Extension Office; Bill Kranz, Northeast Research & Extension Center; Jim Barr, USDA Rural Development; Richard Beran, Lower Loup NRD; Bruce Hansen, NDEQ; Lisa Beethe, Nebraska Environmental Trust; Jennifer Nelson, The Groundwater Foundation (TGF); Jon Mohr, TGF; Clancey Dempsey, TGF; Robert Peterson, NDEQ; Rachael Herpel, The Groundwater Foundation.

II. Meeting Summary

There was no formal agenda for the meeting. Instead the group had an informal discussion of events held and progress made since the October meeting.

A. "Wellhead Protection: A Primer Course"

Bill Kranz gave a report on "Wellhead Protection: A Primer Course," the December 3, 2001 teleconference broadcast throughout Nebraska. The teleconference lasted approximately three-and-a-half hours. Numerous local sites linked up to participate in the teleconference; it is unknown how many individuals participated. The presentations were recorded and will be made available on videotape. Some of the more technical material presented at the teleconference may be expanded into a follow-up conference. Details regarding the conference will be provided to this group as they become available.

Two excerpts from the teleconference are currently available online at ruralroutes.unl.edu. (You will need RealPlayer G2 or higher to watch the videos). One excerpt features Marty Link of DEQ describing the basics of wellhead protection and giving an overview of Nebraska's wellhead protection efforts: what's being done, what's needed and what's planned. The other excerpt features James Schepers of the UNL Department of Agronomy and Horticulture. Professor Schepers describes how pollutants work their way into groundwater and gives an overview of the best ways to minimize groundwater contamination.

Bill briefed the group on a project that Wayne Woldt (Environmental/Water Resources Engineer, Dept. of Biological Systems Engineering, UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources) had suggested that involved compiling materials for a wellhead protection curriculum. The

curriculum would be tailored to address the needs of communities with populations under 2,000 and would be available via the Internet. The conventional wisdom is that information describing how to implement wellhead protection is not getting to the right people (town clerks, town boards, etc.), or if it gets to these people, they do not take the time or have time to go over the material they receive. The curriculum would be organized in a way to make it easier for local leaders to obtain the information they need.

The group expressed some doubt as to whether town clerks and boards would utilize the curriculum as intended. The clerks and boards do not utilize the materials they already have; additional materials could also be underutilized.

B. Partners for Protection Website

Rachael Herpel mentioned that TGF has a section on its website (www.groundwater.org) dedicated to groundwater protection activities in Nebraska. The site was developed as part of the Partners for Protection project and had featured communities participating in NDEQ's Nebraska Environmental Partnerships Program. TGF is planning to open up the site to any Nebraska community interested in featuring their wellhead protection activities. Communities would then be able to see how other communities have gone about implementing wellhead protection. Community contact information is included on the site so communities can contact each other, share experiences and ideas, and potentially even share resources.

C. NRD WHP Brochure

A brochure describing "Wellhead Protection Services from Nebraska's NRDs" is being developed. This is a project that Mike Onnen and McKenzie Barry took on at the October WHPP meeting. Troy Thompson at Lower Platte North NRD is now designing the brochure. A draft of the brochure was passed around. Everyone thought it looked good!

D. General Discussion

Marlene Rasmussen suggested that small communities need a 10-15 minute Groundwater 101 presentation to educate town clerks and boards about the value of groundwater. This is needed because the clerks' and boards' understanding of groundwater varies widely. Marlene thought that this could be most easily done with a video. The video should also feature the financial impact of not protecting their water supply (i.e. the cost of additional wells, treatment systems, and infrastructure); this would grab the clerks' and boards' attention.

Richard Beran detailed the information he presents to town boards to educate them about wellhead protection. He uses maps, well readings, and time-of-travel delineations on an orthophoto map to show them where their wellhead protection area is. He also provides them with a resolution and motion for assistance that they can readily adopt to obtain assistance from the NRD.

This brought up the question – to implement wellhead protection, should "outsiders" develop wellhead protection plans for communities, or should the plan be developed by individuals

within the community? Consensus seemed to be that the best plans are developed by individuals within the community with plenty of outside assistance. In a lot of cases, what small communities really need is zoning expertise to help them with a variety of issues.

Bruce Hanson noted that wellhead protection is not mandatory. It is also not necessary for communities to hire consultants to write a protection plan for them. Ideally they would use NDEQ's Wellhead Protection Plan Guidance, which features the Bug Hollow example plan, to develop a protection plan largely on their own. So far NDEQ has approved four communities' wellhead protection plans.

AmeriCorp members talked about how it is often unclear as to who communities can go to for assistance in developing and implementing a wellhead protection plan.

Jim Barr told the group about how various agencies and organizations get together to develop a support plan for communities who need infrastructure funding. He suggested that agencies and groups in Nebraska who offer support to communities doing wellhead protection should get together and do the same thing.

III. Next Meeting Date and Time

No meeting was scheduled, although the group thought that another meeting should be held rather soon, perhaps in April.