



NE WHPN Meeting Notes

2008 Nebraska Rural Water Association Annual Conference

Session D – Magellan Room

New World Inn, 265 33rd Avenue, Columbus, Nebraska

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

Present: Doug Allen, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS); Robert Allen; Daryl Andersen, Little Blue Natural Resources District (NRD); Chad Augustyn; Charles Bausch, Nebraska Rural Water Association (NRWA); Steven Boeselager, City of Chadron; Marvin Bohling, Nemaha County RWD #2; John Borgstahl; Greg Bouc, Village of Valparaiso; James Cautrell, Village of Magnet; Leroy Cautrell, Village of Coleridge; Mike Cerny; Cope Clark; Bruce Dux; Douglas Echtenkamp, City of Wayne; Floyd Fanning; David Farnstrom; Harvey Foran, Village of Arnold; Russ Gierhart, Upper Big Blue NRD; Thomas Goulette, City of West Point; Matt Gregg, Village of Bertrand; Bruce Hanson, NDEQ; Matthew Helzer, City of St. Paul; Rachael Herpel, The Groundwater Foundation (TGF); David Houghtelling, Village of Bartley and City of Cambridge; Howard Isaacs, NDHHS; Dale Kaliff, City of Stromsburg; Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice; Bob Lockmon, Villages of Newport and Stuart; Kevin Knievel; Alan Krupicka, Village of Alexandria and Village of Tobias; Richard McCabe, Village of Emerson; David Miesbach, NDEQ; Gerald Mousel; Kenneth Mueller, Otoe County RWD # 3; Dwight Nickel, Village of Western; Jerry Petracek, Village of Wilbur; Douglas Phillips; Ralph Pulte, NDHHS; Harold Reynolds, Midwest Assistance Program; Patrick Robinson, Village of Silver Creek; Doug Sams, TGF; Terry Scheidemann; Charles Schmid; David Siegel; Roger Slama; Randy Stocker; Stanley Stultz, Village of St. Edward; Elbert Traylor, NDEQ; Terry Ueding, City of Lyons; Gregory Vacha; Don Vrbicky; Raymond Walden, Village of Goehner; William Ward, Dennis Watts, City of Norfolk; Larry Wennekamp, City of Schuyler; Albert Wood, City of Red Cloud and Gala Gardens Manor, Inc.

I. Welcome

Rachael Herpel (TGF) welcomed everyone to the session and explained that the next three sessions served as a meeting of the NE WHPN, a group of individuals interested in promoting and implementing WHP in Nebraska. Herpel explained that the group usually held separate meetings on a quarterly basis to learn about various “hot topics” and keep each other up-to-date about their WHP activities, but that lately the group had decided to “branch out” and test alternate formats. This was the first time a NE WHPN meeting was essentially “imbedded” into a conference. If people thought this worked well, future meetings could be imbedded into this and other conferences, such as the town clerks’ and the Nebraska Planning and Zoning

Association's. People who wanted to be included on the NE WHPN listserv were asked to sign-up.

II. First Session (11:00 a.m. – 12 noon) – Who, What, Why of Wellhead Protection in Nebraska

Dave Miesbach (NDEQ) gave an overview of wellhead protection in Nebraska, describing the goals, program basics, and five steps to a WHP plan. Miesbach showed a number of examples of WHP area maps, which are the foundation of any WHP effort, and described how WHP plans are approved by NDEQ. A total of 77 WHP plans have so far been approved by NDEQ (i.e., no new plans have been approved since the previous NE WHPN meeting held on November 13, 2007). Miesbach suggested that anyone who would like to implement protection activities should consider applying for a Source Water Protection grant; this program focuses on protecting the quality, quantity, and security of public water systems, along with raising awareness of the need for individual source water protection activities through public education. Grants may apply to either a local, source-specific area or a regional, non-source-specific area. Miesbach also presented information on community-based WHP and the NDEQ well abandonment program. For more information, a complete copy of Miesbach's presentation is available for download at <http://www.groundwater.org> - simply jump to the Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network page. Anyone with questions may also contact Bruce Hanson of NDEQ directly at 402-471-3376; for well abandonment questions contact Brad Routt at 402-471-3381.

Ralph Pulte (NDHHS) gave a presentation on nitrates and nitrites in Nebraska public drinking water, describing that nitrate could potentially come from all types of fertilizer - agricultural, commercial/private, animal and human waste, and natural. Pulte gave an overview of the regulations governing the amount of nitrate that is allowed in drinking water, how public water systems monitor for nitrate, and what happens when a public water system violates the Safe Drinking Water Act standard for nitrate. For more information, a complete copy of Pulte's presentation is available for download at <http://www.groundwater.org> - simply jump to the Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network page. Anyone with questions may also contact Pulte directly at 402-471-0172.

Dale Kaliff with the City of Stromsburg responded to the presentations by noting that federal regulations do serve a purpose in that they are meant to protect the public's health. He encouraged all water system operators to consider working in their community to put together a wellhead protection plan, as he found it very beneficial for his community.

III. Second Session (1:00 – 2:00 p.m.) – When and How of Wellhead Protection

Charles Bausch (NRWA), Bruce Hanson, and Rachael Herpel participated in a panel discussion to share their perspectives and experiences about when and how to do wellhead protection in Nebraska; Herpel also moderated the session. Each panelist had no more than five minutes to respond to each of the following questions -

Based on your perspective and experiences:

- a. When is the best time for communities to plan and implement wellhead protection activities?
- b. What is the best approach to wellhead protection? [the “how” question]
- c. What makes a wellhead protection program successful?

Greg Bouc with the Village of Valparaiso shared his insights and provided comments on what the panelists said. Bouc agreed that recognizing the right time for WHP is important, and made the point that water system operators needed to get out in their communities and build support for WHP over time. The best time to develop and implement a WHP plan is when other leaders in the community are also willing to advocate for WHP.

IV. Third Session (2:00 – 3:00 p.m.) – Examples of WHP in Nebraska

Jerry Petracek with the City of Wilbur described his community’s WHP activities, which have ranged from getting the local Future Farmers of America chapter involved in using GPS to conduct a contaminant source inventory of their WHP area, to utilizing evapotranspiration (ET) gauges to better time irrigation applications in the WHP area, thus minimizing the threat of groundwater contamination through leaching. Petracek has found it especially useful to work closely with his local county extension educator, Randy Pryor.

Steve Kelley with the City of Beatrice described how his public water system has made a concerted effort over recent years to develop a cordial working relationship with the farmers operating in the WHP area. Kelley has found it useful to serve on his local NRD board. By serving on the board, he was able to make sure the NRD’s groundwater management plan was written in such a way that it supported groundwater protection in WHP areas. Kelley went on to note that the city has recently formed a Groundwater Guardian team, which helped the city receive two Source Water Protection grants to increase security by installing fencing in the WHP area and provide cost share to farmers in the WHP area for ET gauges, among other things.

Russ Gierhart with the Upper Big Blue NRD described how it is important to have local champions that keep the WHP process moving forward. These champions can be the local water system operator, but they are also often the town clerk. Gierhart has found that when one community is successful or has a good experience working with their NRD, they share news of that success with their fellow operators or town clerks; thus he has been able to get a number of WHP plans written, adopted, and approved by NDEQ in his district.

Daryl Andersen with the Little Blue NRD gave more detailed information about how evapotranspiration (ET) gauges may be used to better time irrigation applications in the WHP area, thus minimizing the threat of groundwater contamination through leaching.

V. 2008 Meeting Plans – Next Steps

Herpel thanked everyone for coming and noted that the next NE WHPN meeting has yet to be scheduled, but would probably occur in May. The meeting adjourned at 3.