

Nebraska Wellhead Protection (WHP) Discussion Group
May 3, 2001, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality Offices
1200 N Street, Suite 400, Lincoln, Nebraska

Attending: Marty Link, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ); Jackie Stumpff, NDEQ; Todd Falter, Nebraska Health and Human Services; DeLynn Hay, University of Nebraska - Lincoln Cooperative Extension; Richard Beran, Lower Loup Natural Resources District (NRD); Russ Gierhart, Upper Big Blue NRD; McKenzie Barry, Lower Platte North NRD; Chuck Wingert, Nemaha NRD; Bruce Hanson, NDEQ; Bill Lukash, Nebraska Rural Water Association; Don Vogel, Nebraska Corn Growers Association; Paul Sweeney, Nebraska Resource Conservation Service; Stephanie Vap-Morrow, NDEQ; Rachael Herpel, The Groundwater Foundation (TGF); Rick Wozniak, Lower Elkhorn NRD; Lorrie Benson, TGF; Stephanie Lindberg, United States Environmental Protection Agency Region VII; Mike Onnen, Little Blue NRD; Hope Wise, Nebraska Rural Water Association; Elbert Traylor, NDEQ; Gene Siadek, Metropolitan Utilities District, Groundwater Guardian Community; Susan Seacrest, TGF; Wayne Madsen, Trenton, Groundwater Guardian Community

1) Welcome

A quick reference was made to a meeting held by the discussion group on February 13. The May 3 meeting was a continuation and expansion of the February 13 meeting.

The primary questions the group was asked to address were:

- Who is providing WHP-related services?
- What can this group do as a whole to improve the delivery and use of those services?

Each attendee was asked to give a brief description of their work and opportunities they see to expand WHP in Nebraska. New participants were asked to give longer descriptions.

2) Introduction of New Participants/Program Presentations by New Participants

Gene Siadek is a Water Supply Engineer for the Metropolitan Utilities District in Omaha. Gene was asked to attend this meeting by Joel Christiansen, the primary team contact for the Douglas County Groundwater Guardian Team.

Hope Wise recently joined the Nebraska Rural Water Association as a Source Water Protection Technician. Hope's goal is to work with at least three Nebraska communities as they develop and adopt source water protection programs.

Mike Onnen is General Manager of the Little Blue NRD. The Little Blue NRD provides cost-share for well decommissioning and works to reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Rick Wozniack's Lower Elkhorn NRD also works to reduce nonpoint source pollution. The Lower Elkhorn NRD also works with communities and landowners to sign them up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Don Vogel of the Nebraska Corn Growers described a program they have that encourages farmers/landowners to plant buffer strips. Farm consultants work one-on-one with the farmers/landowners to work through a checklist and develop whole farm plans.

Bruce Hanson has been working with NDEQ's WHP Program since it began. Historically the program's focus has been to educate communities about WHP, but that emphasis changes (i.e. now the focus is on conducting source water assessments.) Bruce is currently working to revise the WHP newsletters.

Chuck Wingert is the Nemaha NRD's Water Quality Specialist and has worked with a variety of communities to properly abandon wells and complete source water assessments.

McKenzie Barry is a Wellhead Protection Coordinator for the Lower Platte North NRD. McKenzie has worked with a variety of communities to complete source water assessments, which are presented in both a printed report and CD ROM. Management plans are not part of the report, but may be added by the community at a later date.

Russ Gierhart is a Wellhead Protection Coordinator for the Upper Big Blue NRD and is currently working with three communities to complete their source water assessments.

Dick Beran is a Wellhead Protection Coordinator for the Lower Loup NRD and is looking forward to working with communities within the NRD to develop WHP programs.

Todd Falter works in the Nebraska Health and Human Services Lab and tests water samples for nitrates, pesticides, and a variety of other harmful substances.

Wayne Madsen is a retired well driller from Trenton who volunteers for a variety of organizations and water-related efforts, including Trenton's Groundwater Guardian Team. Trenton has developed a WHP program, but was unable to enroll all the land they wanted to into CRP. Wayne has made efforts to reach Nebraska's Senators and Representatives to urge them to work and change the legislation that restricts the amount of funding states are may use for community CRP (it is now restricted to \$50,000 for the entire state).

3) WHP News from the Group

DeLynn Hay with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Cooperative Extension described how county extension agents could be valuable allies in working with communities, especially small communities. There are a total of 83 county extension offices throughout the state. Many county extension agents already do a great deal of water-related education and local leadership development. DeLynn suggested providing in-service training for extension agents about how to work with and motivate communities to develop, adopt, and implement WHP programs. He also

suggested that county extension agents who are already doing this type of work, such as Dennis Kahl in Seward County, should be invited to speak specifically to how WHP fits with their mission.

Jackie Stumpff directs NDEQ's Nebraska Environmental Partnerships, which offers communities \$2500 grants to conduct assessments and well decommissioning. The grants are available until June of 2001.

4) Coordinated Services Discussion

A) There were several excellent ideas expressed in a general discussion:

1. The group should meet in smaller work groups to focus on specific issues.
2. Personal contacts in communities are very important.
3. The group needs to identify a mission statement and identify issues and concerns.
4. The group needs to identify barriers to WHP.
5. It is important to get citizens engaged in the WHP process.

B) Primary Issues/Areas of Concern:

- Well Registration
- CRP
- Barriers to Protection
- Working Toward Protection
- Funding Opportunities
- Long Term Funding
- Advocacy
- Legislation – National and State
- WHP Event
- Building Community Engagement and Sustaining It
- Improving Communication between Groups

C) People were asked to sign up for working groups.

- WHP "Advocacy" Group - Don Vogel, Stephanie Vap-Morrow, Paul Sweeney, Mike Onnen, Jackie Stumpff, Wayne Madsen
(This group agreed to meet once prior to June 22 - perhaps prior to the WHP meeting on that same day.)
- "Community Empowerment" Group - DeLynn Hay, Susan Seacrest, Paul Sweeney, Dick Beran, Chuck Wingert, Russ Gierhardt, Elbert Traylor
- WHP Event (no one signed up for this group)

5) Next Meeting

The group decided to meet on Friday, June 22 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District, 105 North Lincoln Avenue, York.