



## Meeting Notes

**Monday, February 28, 2005**

**2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**Law Enforcement Center**

**Kearney, Nebraska**

**Attending:** Deana Barger, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ); Sid Bartels, Upper Republican Natural Resources District (NRD); Richard Beran, Lower Loup NRD; Leah Bomberger, NDEQ; Glen Bower, Twin Platte NRD; Mark Bowman, City of Kearney; TJ Brown, Upper Loup NRD; Jack Brummet, Upper Loup NRD; Clancy Dempsey, Nebraska Rural Water Association; Randy Gunn, South Central Nebraska RC&D; Bruce Hanson, NDEQ; Rachael Herpel, The Groundwater Foundation (TGF); Jan Hygnstrom, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension; Terry Julesgard, Lewis & Clark NRD; LeAnn Klein, Buffalo County Zoning & Floodplain; Marlin Kliewer, Gage County Zoning Administrator; Jesse Korus, Lower Platte South NRD; Marty Link, Chris Miller, Miller & Associates; NDEQ; David Miesbach, NDEQ; Jason Moudry, Upper Niobrara-White NRD; Mike Murphy, Middle Niobrara NRD; Charlie Pierce, Nemaha NRD; Ralph Pulte, Nebraska Health and Human Services; Marlene Rasmussen, Litchfield; Carl Roland, North Platte NRD; Kathryn Russell, Kearney County; Dan Schulz; Lower Platte South NRD; Mike Sousek, Lower Platte North NRD; Kirk Stocker, City of Kearney; John Thorburn, Tri-Basin NRD; Elbert Traylor, NDEQ; Carrie Wiese, TGF; Chuck Wingert, Nemaha NRD.

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Rachael Herpel welcomed attendees to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. This meeting was scheduled immediately prior to the Annual NRD Water Programs meeting; consequently a number of NRD staff were able to attend. For some NRD staff, this was their first NE WHPN meeting.

### **II. Nebraska Wellhead Protection Program Update**

Deana Barger announced that the 2005 Source Water Protection (SWP) Request for Proposals (RFP) would be available in the next two to three weeks. Project proposals would be due two months after that. Nearly \$200,000 would be available for SWP projects. Barger noted that the Little Blue NRD received SWP funds to purchase WHP area signs and offer soil sampling and filter strips to farmers in WHP areas; the South Platte NRD received SWP funds to help homeowners in WHP areas replace bluegrass with buffalo grass. Barger will make sure all the NRDs and everyone in the NE WHPN will receive the RFP.

Marty Link distributed copies of the latest list of communities with approved WHP plans; there are 46. Elbert Traylor mentioned that NDEQ's Nonpoint Source program is redefining WHP so that it corresponds more to the state-approved planning process. The group then talked about complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act nitrate standard. Communities with nitrate levels below 15 have the option of adopting a WHP plan as part of a "return to compliance." Soil sampling is needed to show that the WHP plan is having an impact and reducing the amount of nitrate in the area. Additional guidance is needed on soil sampling protocols (e.g. where in the WHP area should soil samples be taken).

Dan Schulz asked whether NDEQ would continue updating delineation maps. Link commented that NDEQ is using the most simple computer model available (WHAM) and maps will be updated when conditions in the WHP area change (e.g. new wells are drilled, geologic knowledge improves).

Clancy Dempsey briefed the group on his recent activities in Baird, Hershey, Curtis, and Valentine. Dempsey extended the offer to work with communities under 10,000 (preferably under 2,000) to develop WHP plans.

Richard Beran briefed the group on WHP activities in his area – 40 abandoned wells have been properly decommissioned as part of his WHP work. Chuck Wingert mentioned that Auburn is planning to submit a SWP grant proposal, which will include well abandonment. Carl Roland pointed out that in areas with well moratoriums in place, communities may want to keep existing wells open until they have a plan on how to replace them; otherwise they may lose the right to replace that well. Communities may be better off getting wells listed as officially inactive.

Mike Sousek informed the group that North Bend passed an ordinance to ban private wells within the city limits. He's been working with David City, who is planning to sell water to Abie. Regionalization/consolidation have also kept him busy; 2-3 rural water districts may come on line in the Lower Platte North NRD this year.

Jason Moudry informed the group that he's working with each of the thirteen community water systems in the Upper-Niobrara White NRD. Each is at a different stage of the WHP process. Chadron is an especially interesting case - they use a combination of groundwater, surface water, and groundwater under the influence of surface water for their source water.

Carl Roland informed the group that the U.S. Corp of Engineers is conducting a study in the North Platte NRD. The study will determine whether a regional water supply should be developed to help communities comply with arsenic and uranium Safe Drinking Water Act standards. Other NRDs are working with Paxton, Stapleton, and Holdrege.

Elbert Traylor informed the group that Well Head Area Management Assistance (WHAMA) grants are available to those NRDs interested in promoting WHP in their area. NRDs may receive up to five years of funding to initiate a WHP program for their district.

### **III. WHP Program Case Studies – Lexington and Kearney**

Chris Miller gave an overview of the WHP process (i.e. delineation, public education, contaminant source inventory, and contaminant source management). He offered delineation as the key to the WHP process because it identifies the area to be protected. Depending upon the delineation, communities may be protecting way too much or way too little.

Miller presented Lexington as an example of a community who used computer models to identify the location of their new wells. They had thirteen wells scattered throughout town. These wells were originally sited out

of convenience (i.e. they were close to the customers in town), but now they were failing. The new wells were located so they would not impact each other through their drawdown.

Miller presented Kearney as an example of where a more precise computer model was used to target protection activities to where they would have the most impact. Kearney's new wells are located on Kilgore Island in the Platte River; the city owns the island. Most of these wells are drawing water from a layer of sand and gravel which is only 5-57 feet thick. Consequently, these wells were determined to be under the influence of surface water and must be protected within a 24 hour time-of-travel zone. For the Kearney wellfield this zone extends 37.2 miles upstream. Kearney does not have jurisdiction this far upstream. Kearney has gotten a SWP grant to conduct a contaminant source inventory for the area within their jurisdiction. Kearney proposes adopting a special overlay district to protect their source water area from the potential contaminants identified. Open houses and public meetings will be held from April-August to discuss WHP strategies.

For more information, contact Chris Miller at [cmiller@millers-engineers.com](mailto:cmiller@millers-engineers.com).

#### **IV. Open Forum**

Marty Link handed out an article describing the contamination of public drinking water systems on South Bass Island in Ohio. Drinking water was contaminated by sewage from septic systems and runoff containing bird droppings and lawn fertilizer. Upwards of 1,400 people got sick from drinking the contaminated water. Jan Hygnstrom informed the group that the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension is currently writing NebGuides for arsenic and uranium.

#### **V. Next Meeting**

The NE WHPN is cordially invited to attend a Nebraska wellcare® Workshop, being held April 14 at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. The workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. Contact Rachael Herpel at 402-434-2740 or [rachael@groundwater.org](mailto:rachael@groundwater.org) for information on continuing education credits or to register. This workshop is sponsored by the Water Systems Council, the Nebraska Well Drillers Association, and The Groundwater Foundation.