



## **Meeting Notes**

**Wednesday, November 2, 2005**

**10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**Nemaha Natural Resources District  
Tecumseh, Nebraska**

**Attending:** Daryl Andersen, Little Blue Natural Resources District (NRD); Deana Barger, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ); Marcy Bauer, Public Health Solutions, Inc.; Tom Christopherson, Nebraska Health and Human Services; Clancy Dempsey, Nebraska Rural Water Association (NRWA); Kerry Ferguson, South Platte NRD; Russ Gierhart, Upper Big Blue NRD; Bruce Hanson, NDEQ; Ellen Hartman, NDEQ; Rachael Herpel, The Groundwater Foundation; Jan Hygnstrom, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension; Marlin Kliewer, Gage County Zoning Administrator; Tina Kurtz, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources; Eric Lee, City of Lincoln; Stephanie Lindberg, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region VII; Marty Link, NDEQ; David Miesbach, NDEQ; Jason Moudry, Upper Niobrara-White NRD; Charlie Pierce, Nemaha NRD; Ralph Pulte, Nebraska Health and Human Services; Gregory Steele, USGS Nebraska Water Science Center; Jenny Steventon, Sarpy/Cass Department of Health & Wellness; Elbert Traylor, NDEQ; Barney Whatley, NRWA; Chuck Wingert, Nemaha NRD.

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

Rachael Herpel welcomed attendees to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Jan Hygnstrom briefed the group on how on-site wastewater contractor certification had been progressing and noted that she has seen increasing awareness and a sense of professional responsibility emerge among the contractors. The license costs \$300 and is good for two years. A list of certified contractors is available on NDEQ's website and may be easily accessed using the following university link – [wastewater.unl.edu](http://wastewater.unl.edu).

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

As of November 2 a total of 57 wellhead protection plans had been approved by NDEQ; this is ten more since the last time the group met. Another four wellhead protection plans have been submitted for approval and are currently under review. NDEQ staff gave a quick overview of the wellhead protection planning process. NDEQ has identified the protection area and drawn a

delineation map for every public water supply well in the state. Local leaders are then responsible for developing a wellhead protection plan, which must include a map, contaminant source inventory, controls (can be voluntary or regulatory), and an emergency plan. The plan must go through a public review process prior to being submitted to NDEQ. NDEQ has 90 days to review the plan. NDEQ expressed a preference for guiding local leaders through a process whereby they withdraw, revise and resubmit their plans, rather than denying plans.

Individuals working directly with communities on their wellhead protection plans gave brief status reports:

- Daryl Anderson is working with Edgar, who is using their wellhead protection plan to comply with the nitrate standard (they are currently under administrative order to do so). Edgar has applied for a 319 grant to implement protection activities, such as replace gravity pivot irrigation with center pivot. Adams County is close to adopting language to include a wellhead protection overlay district in their zoning regulations.
- Russ Gierhart has limited the number of communities he works with at any one time to four; he now has a waiting list of communities wanting to work on wellhead protection. His goal is to do a plan for every public water system in his district.
- Jason Moudry noted that Crawford's wellhead protection plan had been approved. They are working with Craig Romary with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to investigate a spill near Hemingford's wells. He is also working on a contaminant source inventory for Gordon.
- Clancy Dempsey is working with Palmer and Curtis, who have begun their public notification processes. He has also been working with Ogallala, Lyons, Valentine, Smithfield, Brady, Grant, and Elwood.
- Barney Whatley is fairly new to his position, which focuses on working with three areas a year to develop, adopt and implement regional source water protection plans. The Nebraska Rural Water Association recently received a grant to purchase and loan groundwater flow models, test kits, and GPS units to students interested in doing water projects.
- Eric Lee reported that the City of Lincoln is working to get bank filtration and ozone credits for its wells that are under the influence of surface water.
- Chuck Wingert and Charlie Pierce are working with Humboldt, Richardson County, Falls City, and Rulo.

Ralph Pulte informed the group that the number of public water systems on administrative order to comply with the nitrate standard is 16 (down from 19). Smithfield had been taken off administrative order, but will probably go back on. Pender should be off the list. Bayard and Edgar will return to compliance through the wellhead protection planning and approval process. He pointed out that anyone can use the following website ([http://www3.hhs.state.ne.us/Sdwis\\_State/index.jsp](http://www3.hhs.state.ne.us/Sdwis_State/index.jsp)) to find out whether a system is in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. This website also includes sampling results and contact information.

Deana Barger provided the group with a list of the projects funded by NDEQ's Source Water Protection Program. This year 21 proposals were submitted with funding requests totaling over

\$770,000. A committee of representatives from NDEQ, Nebraska Health and Human Services, NRWA, and the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts reviewed all proposals. Nine source-specific and two regional projects were selected for funding for a total of \$196,546.

### **III. Groundwater Quality and Wellhead Protection Case Study**

Kerry Ferguson, Information and Education Coordinator for the South Platte NRD, presented information about what their district has been doing to promote wellhead protection, especially in regards to the City of Sidney. In 2001 Sidney's nitrate levels spiked; their high nitrate wells are now blended with wells located north of the city. The district has implemented a "Cash for Grass" program to encourage landowners in the city to convert water-hungry blue grass to less water-hungry buffalo grass and xeriscape. Ferguson also documented the relatively recent explosion of irrigation wells in the district, along with the impact this has had water levels in the alluvial aquifer (levels are declining) and the Ogallala Aquifer (levels are holding steady).

### **IV. LB 962 and Its Potential Impacts on Wellhead Protection**

Tina Kurtz, Integrated Management Planning Coordinator for the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, described the provisions of LB 962, which was signed into law on April 15, 2004.

### **V. Next Meeting**

The NE WHPN is cordially invited to attend a meeting at the State Capitol Building on January 31 in Lincoln. Along with highlighting basic groundwater facts and the importance of groundwater and wellhead protection in Nebraska, the meeting will give attendees a chance to converse with state senators and their staff about this important topic. The meeting will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 9 a.m. Breakfast will be provided.

The NE WHPN is also cordially invited to display information about their work in the capitol. January 30 – February 3 has been designated as "Wellhead Protection Awareness Week" at the capitol; consequently we have space for up to 20 easels or 12 tables to put up displays and educate senators, their staff, and visitors about wellhead protection and the work done locally to protect drinking water sources.

For more information or to reserve an easel or table in the capitol, please contact Rachael Herpel at 402-434-2740 or [rachael@groundwater.org](mailto:rachael@groundwater.org).