



## **NEBRASKA WELLHEAD PROTECTION NETWORK**

**Thursday June 27, 2019**

**Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District Office  
319 East 25th Street  
York, NE**

### **Summary**

#### **Present:**

Ryan Chapman - Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), Sam Radford – NDEQ, Carla McCullough – NDEQ, Carla Felix – NDEQ, Justin Nelsen – Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Shelley Rekte – DHHS, Dan Inman – NDEQ, John Danforth – NDEQ, Taylor Benzel – NDEQ, Lindsey Roark – NDEQ, Sara Brock – Groundwater Foundation, Dylan Vogt – JEO Consulting, Crystal Powers – Nebraska Water Center, Erinn Richert – Upper Big Blue NRD, Dan Leininger – Upper Big Blue NRD, Scott Gonnerman – producer, Keith Miller – Hastings Utilities, Jenny Sidlo – Hastings Utilities, Marty Stange – Hastings Utilities

#### **Round Robin Notes:**

**The Groundwater Foundation** – Sara Brock talked about the progress on the Recharging Groundwater Education Project, which included the development of online training videos to share groundwater education. She also continued to promote the opportunity for WHPN members to become Experts in the Classroom. Sara announced that the next Wellhead Protection Network event would be a workshop on Emergency Preparedness on October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Valley, NE, more details to follow.

**Hastings** – Marty Stange, Jenny Sidlo, and Keith Miller announced that the progress on the Aquifer Storage and Restoration (ASR) project was ahead of schedule. They are looking to get started on phase III of the project which involves installing injection wells. Jenny and Keith are both attempting local well sampling but have had to adjust their sampling schedule due to the above average rainfall this spring. Marty is currently waiting on results from vadose zone sampling taken earlier this year by the University

of Nebraska – Lincoln. The results will help evaluate existing management projects and inform the direction of future projects.

**Upper Big Blue NRD** – Erinn Richert briefly touched on the NRD’s Source Water Grant in cooperation with the City of York to implement programming around rain barrels and rain gardens. Nitrate sampling within the Wellhead Protection Area outside of the City of York was continuing with schedule adjustments due to rain.

**Papio-Missouri NRD** – Paul Woodward worked with the county health department after the spring floods, dividing up the work for the 800 domestic well tests within the NRD as well as the Lower Platte South/North boundary tests. The AEM 2018 reports have come in and are available on enrwa.org. With the advanced technology, they were able to clearly show that Arlington’s wellhead protection area is connected to the Platte and Elkhorn watersheds. Monitoring data in the Platte and Elkhorn areas will help direct AEM work and drinking water management plans near Valley. The NRD has 2 current source water grants to develop drinking water protection management plans in Springfield and Tekamah. Data collected from the AEM report was used to adjust the Springfield model. NDEQ and Papio-Missouri NRD are using the Groundwater Evaluation Tool from Olsson, shared with WHPN at the November 2018 workshop, in coordination with AEM data to form the most current and accurate wellhead protection plans.

**Nebraska Water Center at the University Nebraska – Lincoln** – Crystal Powers announced that the Water Center’s Annual Report had been published and provided a summary of the past 2 years. The report can be accessed in the attached documents. Crystal announced several upcoming events, including a Statewide Nitrate Coalition Meeting in Lincoln, NE on August 21<sup>st</sup> from 10 am – 12 pm; The Water and Natural Resources Tour, which will be headed to Yellowstone and the Missouri Headwaters on September 15-20; and the Nebraska Water Center Fall Symposium in Norfolk on October 9-10.

Crystal announced that Katie Pekarek, a Water Quality educator with UNL, held an interest meeting with UNL faculty and staff with the goal of looking at nitrate management in new ways, both in research and education. She also shared that Jeremy Milander was hired as the new extension coordinator for the Bazile Groundwater Management Area. Through a grant from NET, he oversees three demo farm projects looking at new technologies to manage irrigation and nutrient application, how to reduce nitrates as well as the cost of reducing nitrates, and adding in cover crops in an extended rotation.

Finally, Crystal referred to the Nebraska Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) and a potential opportunity for expansion. TAPs has been held in North Platte for the last several years, but the programs popularity is opening up the possibility to extend the program to eastern Nebraska in the near future.

**JEO** – Dillon Vogt shared JEO’s part in the watershed management NDEQ, Papio-Missouri NRD, and Upper Big Blue NRD. JEO has been working on a vadose zone report with the community of Waverly, conducting an aquifer pump test in the city of Syracuse to look at the limited connection between the upper and lower aquifers, conducting an aquifer pump test and drafting a wellhead protection area for the city of Tekamah, and conducting a contaminant source inventory and drafting a groundwater and drinking water protection area for the city of Broken Bow. He is looking at potential new projects in Plainview, Ashland, and Dodge.

**NDEQ/DHHS**– NDEQ and DHHS announced the upcoming merge to become the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE). Ryan Chapman provided updates on the revamp to the statewide groundwater Clearing House database. They are looking at collaboration with USGS, picking out regional wells in Nebraska that would be able to define aquifer quality in the USGS's national groundwater database. NDEQ is also looking for funding in the future to make sure that NRDs can continue to sample the wells and potentially offer free or reduced cost testing of private wells. The Groundwater Protection Council will have their annual conference in Oklahoma City on September 16<sup>th</sup> and Ryan will present in the afternoon on source water protection and utilizing federal funding in watershed plans.

Carla McCullough announced that she was working with NRDs to finish watershed management plans. These plans include the collaboration of the Upper Big Blue NRD and city of York for Project GROW, the Nemaha and Lewis & Clark NRDs, and the communities of Fairbury, Auburn, and Waverly. The watershed management plans will then qualify these areas for 319 funding as soon as EPA has accepted them.

Sam Radford is working on plans for Syracuse, Springfield, Broken Bow, Tekamah, and Wilbur. NDEQ will be working with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to conduct vadose zone sampling in Waverly. Sam shared that recipients of the source water grants will be announced soon. NDEQ has also been working with the NRCS to create a geo-database for funding opportunities. Sam's final announcement was her move to a new position in emergency response planning. NDEQ is interviewing people to fill her roll and she hopes to have it filled by the fall.

John Danforth provided updates on the state revolving fund, which provides loan funds for planning and development of watershed management plans and non-point source projects. If a community is receiving FEMA or NEMA funds but haven't been able to receive them, then they are applicable for low-interest flood loans until the emergency funds become available.

Carla Felix announced that the senate was out but that state senators Pansing-Brooks and Bostelman were on a subcommittee to look into climate change and educate other legislators about the emergency preparedness process. The Healthy Soils bill by Senator Walz did not pass, but the cover crops bill sponsored by Senator Gragert was passed.

**Presentations:**

See attached PowerPoint. Meeting concluded in a tour of the York's Project GROW cover crop fields and pollinator garden, located in the city's wellfield, as well as the Project GROW community garden.