Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network
Zoom Virtual Meeting
Tuesday, August 11th, 2020 2:00-3:30 pm

Present:

Sara Brock – The Groundwater Foundation; Jason Orton – Orton Management; Tatiana Davila – Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE); Tara Anderson – NDEE; Becky Scheurman – University of Nebraska Extension; Craig Romary – Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Ryan Chapman – NDEE; Russel Iwan – Metropolitan Utilities District; Dick Erhman – Lower Platte South Natural Resources District; Mike Parde – Fremont Department of Utilities; Lee Orton – Nebraska Well Drillers Association; Paul Woodward – Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District

The Groundwater Foundation
Sara Brock shared opportunities for virtual training on groundwater educational materials, including the Awesome Aquifer Kit and Hydrogeology Challenge. Nebraska water professionals who work with youth can be provided with free training and educator toolkits through the “everyone is an educator” initiative.
She also announced the WellOwner.Org relaunch and Know Your Well new podcast premiere. The new website makes it easier for well owners to find educational resources and the podcast features experts in water availability, water quality, and well construction and maintenance in order to reach audiences new to well care and maintenance. Sara also offered opportunities for WHPN members to participate as experts on the podcast.
Finally, Sara announced that the annual workshop in November would be on the topic of adverse human health effects and water quality.

NDEE
Ryan Chapman provided updates on the efforts to revamp the ClearingHouse Database, a comprehensive database on groundwater quality and contaminant threats in Nebraska. These updates include making it more user-friendly, easier to read, and with more searchable filters, up-to-date sampling, the ability to add more background layers such as groundwater vulnerabilities, layers, and even more kinds of water quality data, beyond agro-contaminants. The site officially relaunched August 17th. The new site also has the ability for users to click on a well and view its DNR well log.

Tatiana Davila announced that the RFP deadline for the Source Water Grants was August 21. The town of Wahoo applied for funds to delineate a WHPA using Modflow. Additionally, they received applications for a lot of source water funding to help Know Your Well projects. Information about the Know Your Well projects was provided by Paul Woodward.
Three Drinking Water Protection Management Plans are in the works for Waverly, Tekameh, and Springfield, and Syracuse’s DWP/MP were already headed down to EPA for approval. Auburn is seeking 319 funding to upgrade some septic systems in the area. These funds may be approved for up to 60% of the cost.

Tara Anderson provided information on the Link Deposit program, which offers low-interest loans for people working on environmental projects through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. This program has a broad spectrum of eligibility and could theoretically include anything that benefits water quality such as fixing under-performing septic systems, making terraces, or implementing nutrient management plans for small producers.

**Papio-Missouri NRD**

Paul Woodward elaborated on the Know Your Well project that was briefly touched on by NDEE. The project, previously operated by UNL, is moving beyond the university towards an NRD-run project. The goal is to have each NRD work with 1-2 high schools in their district, with sampling taking place in WHP areas. A large collaboration of NRDS submitted a proposal to NET to fund the program, including the hiring of a program coordinator, who will work out of UNK to provide information and education statewide. The expansion of the Know Your Well program will include suburban schools in Springfield, Tekameh, and Bennington.

Paul added to Tatiana’s announcements about two DWPPs in his district. Springfield’s plan has been sent down to EPA and Tekameh’s is still under review. Tekameh has 4 enhanced decommissioned wells, as they’ve found that proper decommissioning leads to more managed and consistent nitrate levels. Springfield has plans to install a brand new municipal well.

Papio-Missouri NRD is finishing up with the AEM flights on northwest side of Omaha. The data and maps collected from these flights is more accurate and precise than previous measurements and is being used to delineate WHPAs.

**Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD)**

Russel Iwan shared that MUD is still cleaning up from the 2018 spring flooding. The Platte West station is done, but Platte South was inundated with sand and they have to ship it to a proper disposal site. Recently, MUD has been releasing statements about the district’s response to Covid-19.

**UNL Extension**

Becky Schuerman shared her recent work on creating CEU-approved courses for realtors on domestic wells and water supply. While Covid-19 put in-person/on-site wastewater professional education on hold, she and her team have been developing a new module for online training available on national wastewater association. She plans on making this course available with CEUs. She also shared that she’s been reviewing and revising a bank of articles for newsletters, newspapers, websites, and press releases.

Finally, Becky announced that she has been working with high school and middle school teachers to design classroom curriculum around wells and wastewater.
**Lower Platte South NRD**
Dick Ehrman is finishing up verification studies for the six WHPAs in his district. Greenwood will likely move to phase 2. Emerald may or may not progress to phase 2, depending on the analysis of the verification study. Pleasant dale is already phase 2 but may move to phase 3. Waverly is in the process of developing a complete DWPP and, once it’s approved by the EPA, will use that to delineate a phase 2 area. Both Ashland, which is split between Lower Platte South and Lower Platte North NRDs, and Raymond are just starting their verification studies. Dick expects that, in the next few years, the Lower Platte South NRD will have up to seven more phase 2 nitrate management communities.

**Nebraska Well Drillers Association/Orton Management**
Lee Orton and Jason Orton are working on a virtual Continuing Education but are waiting for approval of funding from NET and/or NDEE. Jason is also working on TV program, tentatively titled “Nebraska: A Water Factory”. The program is a series of interviews of water experts from with NRDs, Game and Parks, environmental law firms, and more. It is set to premiere in November. Nebraska State Irrigation Association’s annual conference will be a virtual event this year.