Source Protection and Landowners: Contamination and Conservation

by Liz Royer, VRWA

A source protection area (SPA) is the land from which contaminants are considered likely to reach a public water intake. Within a SPA, human land uses and naturally occurring materials may cause a public water system to become vulnerable to contamination. While naturally-occurring contaminants can usually be controlled by treatment methods, property owners are often able to manage their land uses to further lower the risk of contamination.

Source water protection programs are required for most public water sources in Vermont and help to reduce or eliminate the potential risks of contamination to drinking water systems. These programs may address land use activities, town plans and municipal ordinances, emergency planning, and watershed or aquifer management.

Some state rules, such as those administered by the DEC’s Wastewater and Waste Management Divisions, may restrict activities within SPAs. For example, new landfills and sludge disposal sites are prohibited within Zones 1 and 2 of surface water SPAs. In addition, proposed new septic systems within some SPAs require an extra level of permit review to ensure that they will not adversely impact the public drinking water source. The Agency of Agriculture also considers public drinking water source protection in its pesticide application permits. Public drinking water source protection is also factored into Act 250 decisions.

In addition to industrial and commercial land use, private landowners and homeowners within a source protection area can impact public water systems and water sources. If someone owns land or lives within a SPA, protecting surface...
I am writing to thank you for your help with our well for the main school. The use of the Association’s down-well inspection instrument and your technical advice were instrumental in helping us correct the problem and put our system back on line.

I have been the Director of Maintenance for the Strafford School District for the last 25 years. There are many aspects involved in keeping the buildings and grounds of a small rural school up to standards, but none as important as ensuring a safe drinking water supply.

Your organization has been a crucial resource for us, both in dealing with problems when they arise as well as helping to sort through the regulations and ensure proper testing and operation of our system.

It is wonderful to know that I can count on your organization and your skilled technicians. Thank you again for all that you do.

Sincerely,

John Freitag
Director of Maintenance and Class 2 Water Operator, Strafford School District
Good News for VRWA

by Shaun Fielder, Executive Director, VRWA

Happy New Year to all of you! I am pleased to report that we have made some steps forward towards funding the technical staff positions that we lost last year. As of January 1, one of our EPA programs is back in place.

This has led to a staffing addition at VRWA. Aaron Perez joined us as a Water Systems Specialist at the beginning of January. He will be providing onsite technical assistance for water systems in various towns, municipalities and fire districts in the southern half of the state.

Aaron most recently worked for the Town of Randolph as supervisor for the water and wastewater department. He brings a significant amount of experience to the table and he is an excellent addition to our team. His contact information is noted in the “contact our staff” insert of this issue.

As noted, one of our EPA programs is back in place and Paula Jackson has taken over this position. She will be responsible for technical assistance and onsite training for all classes of water systems across Vermont. She will be working closely with our Training Specialist, Phil Acebo, to ensure all water operators have varied opportunities for continuing education training. Paula’s contact information is also listed in the insert.

Given the loss of programs last spring, these two positions are positive news indeed! VRWA is constantly advocating for continued funding of our rural water programs at the state and national level.

We are currently gearing up for our annual fly-in visits to Washington to meet with our congressional delegation. VRWA will present the need, importance, and value of our programs and particularly the services offered to water and wastewater systems in Vermont. We are fortunate to have the ongoing support of Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders and Congressman Welch on funding for the rural water programs. This being said, the effort of securing support is a never ending process.

VRWA advocates for all the public water and wastewater systems of the state. Your letters of support are always appreciated and can be forwarded to my attention. Your examples of how we helped out allow us to demonstrate to our representatives all the good work accomplished through the rural water programs.

Register for the Annual Conference!

We are looking forward to another VRWA Annual Conference & Trade Show on May 7-8 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. The conference kicks off with the scramble golf tournament on the afternoon of May 7. After golf, the staff and board will host a meet and greet dinner that evening. The vendor exhibits, continuing education training, and the VRWA annual business meeting will all take place on May 8.

See page three for a registration form or visit www.vtruralwater.org. Please pencil in the date and plan on joining us.

Sad Tidings

As many of you know, the world lost a great man on December 28, 2007. George Dow, long time GMWEA Board Member and the Superintendent of Water Pollution Control for the City of South Burlington, passed away after a courageous battle with illness. The wastewater industry and all that knew him mourn his loss.

George Dow was larger than life and brought great enthusiasm to all he touched. He always had a smile for you and a contagious laugh. His humor, wisdom and tremendous knowledge will be greatly missed, as well as his dedication to improving the quality of wastewater treatment.

Please keep his family in your thoughts.

George Dow
Vermont Rural Water Association
Annual Conference
& Trade Show
May 7-8, 2008
Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vermont

Who Should Attend
Operators, managers, directors and other representatives of water and wastewater systems, as well as regulators and industry vendors.

Location
Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vermont. Fairlee is near the Vermont–New Hampshire border about 20 miles north of White River Junction. Directions: From I-91, take Exit 15. The resort entrance road is just west of the exit.

Golf Tournament
Our Seventh Annual Golf Tournament will be held on Wednesday, May 7, the day before the main conference. Come early and join the fun! The tournament begins at 12:30pm.

Luncheon & Awards
Our awards luncheon and Annual Meeting is the perfect chance to talk shop with your peers.

Sessions
An early-bird session will begin at 7:30am on Thursday, May 8. Other sessions will take place throughout the day beginning at 9:30am. Topics may include:

- GIS mapping
- Long term planning & capacity development
- Wastewater system troubleshooting
- Emergency management & security tools
- Regulatory updates
- Pump demonstrations
Training contact hours for water and wastewater operators will be awarded for all sessions. Earn up to 3.5 TCH.

Lodging
The resort’s overnight package includes your hotel room and dinner on May 7, a full breakfast in the dining room on May 8, and use of all resort facilities. Rates are $155/night ($220/night for double occupancy), plus 9% Vermont rooms & meals tax and a 19% service charge. Reservations should be made directly with Lake Morey Resort by April 7; call 800-423-1211 and mention Vermont Rural Water.

Cancellation policy: A full refund will be issued if cancellation is made by April 18, 2008.

For More Information
Call us at 800-556-3792 or visit our website for updates: www.vtruralwater.org.

Register today!
Mail this form, call 800-556-3792, or visit www.vtruralwater.org.

Registration Form
Duplicate this form for multiple registrations.

Name___________________________ Nickname (for badge)____________________
System/Business____________________________________________________________
Address___________________________________________________________________
City_____________________________________ State_________ Zip________________
Phone ___________________________ Email __________________________________
Questions? Call us at 800-556-3792.

Rates for One Attendee & Lunch for 5/8
Registration Rates before April 18, 2008
_____ $45 Member
_____ $55 Non-Member
_____ $65 all registrants after April 18 and at the door

Golf Tournament (5/7 at 12:30pm)
_____ $50 if overnight resort guest
_____ $70 for day attendees

Dinner (5/7 at 6:30pm, separate charge for those not staying at the resort only)
_____ $38

_____ Total Enclosed
Make checks payable to VRWA.
Mail this form with your payment to: VRWA, 20 Susie Wilson Road, Suite B Essex Jct., VT 05452-2827
Here is where television comes in. Early in January, I met with Katrin Helgason, Scheduling Coordinator for Vermont Interactive Television (VIT). We discussed the availability and potential for using this resource for water and wastewater training. VIT would allow us to add locations that stretch from the Canadian border to Massachusetts and all the points in between.

If you’re not familiar with VIT, here’s a snapshot. Currently VIT has fifteen locations in Vermont that cover the state from north to south and are capable of both broadcasting and receiving. Not only do they have interstate capability, but locations also reach beyond Vermont and beyond the United States.

Each VIT studio is outfitted to support the videoconference with VCRs, computers, PowerPoint, overhead cameras (which replace white boards and chalkboards), fax machines, an internet connection, and projectors for computer displays. When you come into a VIT studio, you will see and hear people at another location just as they can see and hear you. It’s like being in the same room.

Costs for these facilities vary with the number of sites, with the originating site costing $55/hour and each additional site costing $20/hour. An 8am-12pm class with three locations would cost $380 in location rental fees. So good attendance at these presentations will be important.

Is this the answer? Probably not for everyone, but it does lend us more flexibility. Will it work for all classes? No, classes that have a hands-on flavor to them will be much better served using our current structure. Also, many are accustomed to having Shaun, Paula, Wayne, or myself there physically greeting them in the morning—not to mention the host of guest instructors from the Water Supply Division or companies associated with the water/wastewater profession. With this technology, we will definitely lose some of that personal touch.

So what’s the next step for VRWA and VIT? This summer, when the weather is nice, I’m going to pilot a class using this technology, probably with two or three sites. We have some logistics to work out in the meantime, but we should be able to overcome these issues. We’ll give it a try, ask for your feedback, and then decide if there’s a place for this type of instruction.

I can foresee this type of instruction making life much easier for folks by reducing the time you spend away from your daily routine, reducing costs, and providing a wider variety of training topics. On your part, we will need folks to try the new format and understand that this is an experiment and that their participation is important in helping us understand how we can better deliver instruction.

That’s it from the training side and I hope that this technology can help us all do our jobs better. See you this summer on TV!!

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Drinking Water Week On the Way

by Ian Schrauf, VRWA

Vermont Drinking Water Week (DWW) is May 4-10, 2008. This year’s theme is “Water Makes Vermont Grow.”

The Water Fair is scheduled for Friday, May 9 on the State House lawn. We will feature performances by the National Theatre for Children, lawn games, educational displays, a water tasting contest, award presentations to poster and photography contest winners and more. Please join us!

This year’s program includes both poster and photography contests. Both are open to all 4th, 5th and 6th grade students in Vermont. The DWW Committee is busy working on the details for the 2008 activities. The National Theatre for Children will again be doing performances which teach about source protection and water conservation at elementary schools around the state.

Clean, safe drinking water like we all produce every day is important to daily life. Any time is a good time to celebrate our great product—but Drinking Water Week is the perfect time. You might ask, “How do I celebrate Drinking Water Week?” Here are a few ways to help out:

- Make sure your community schools are participating in the photo or poster contest. Also see if they are interested in the National Theatre for Children performance
- Volunteer to help on the DWW committee or at the Water Fair
- Arrange tours of your water plant for the community and your school
- Become a sponsor

Contact Ian Schrauf at ischrauf@vtruralwater.org or Paula Jackson at pjackson@vtruralwater.org or call 800-556-3792 ext. 321 if you want to be a sponsor, join our fun committee, share your ideas, or need more information.

Further information is also available on our website at www.vtruralwater.org/industry/DrinkingWaterWeek/index.php.

Lawn games at the Drinking Water Fair.

The only Must-Read book for the industry is now available!


Call now to get your own copy of
The “Works” in Waterworks:
1-800-EJP-24HR
or email: refmanual@ejprescott.com

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water and groundwater on the property takes on extra importance. This is because everything spilled on the land or in a stream or dumped down a septic system may ultimately reappear in someone’s drinking water tap. Landowners may be able to help by preventing pollution, mitigating contamination, and even by conserving water. Some suggestions for system operators to pass along to landowners, homeowners, and residents within a source protection area include:

For septic systems
- Have the tank pumped regularly (every 2-5 years depending on household use)
- Do not use any chemicals in the system

For home heating oil
- Inspect the tank each fall for cracks, rust, and other types of failure
- Above ground storage tanks should be secured, protected from falling ice, & have a concrete overfill protection area

Other ideas for residents
- Do not dispose of hazardous chemicals down the toilet or outside on the ground; participate in household hazardous waste collection days instead (contact local waste management districts for information)
- Learn about natural alternatives to lawn fertilizers and garden pesticides
- Limit the amount of salt applied to sidewalks and driveways (or use alternatives)
- Dispose of pet waste properly
- Prepare for potential gasoline and auto oil spills; look for leaking USTs

Water conservation ideas
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap until the water gets cold
- Replace five-gallon-per-flush toilets with standard 1.9 gallon-per-flush models. This can save an average of 18,600 gallons of water per year
- Fixing that leaky toilet can save as much as 500 gallons a day. Find leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank. If the color begins to appear in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second can add up to 2,700 gallons per year
- Don’t let the water run while brushing teeth, shaving, or cleaning vegetables. On average, you will save more than five gallons
- Take shorter showers. A quick shower rather than a bath can save an average of 20 gallons of water. EPA recommends taking three to five-minute showers
- Use both sides of the sink when washing dishes: one side to wash and the other to rinse. Don’t wash dishes with the water running
- Garbage disposals use approximately 11.5 gallons of water per day. Try composting organic wastes instead
- Use the dishwasher and washer only when you have full loads
- When cleaning a fish tank, use the drained water on plants. The water is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus
- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it such as watering a plant or cleaning
- Water lawns and plants only when necessary. Water early in the morning or during the evening when there’s less evaporation
- Direct downspouts and other runoff toward shrubs, trees, and gardens
- Plant drought-resistant trees and plants. Use mulch around trees to slow evaporation
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks and driveways
- Install covers on pools and spas and check for leaks around pumps

Sources (see for more information)
EPA WaterSense www.epa.gov/WaterSense/
Earth 911 http://earth911.org/water/
Water Saver Home www.h2ouse.org/
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