2009 Vermont Drinking Water Week

by Ian Schrauf, VRWA

Vermont Drinking Water Week (DWW) is May 3 – 9, 2009. This year’s theme is “Take Back the Tap!” The Water Fair is scheduled for Friday, May 8th on the state house lawn. We will feature performances by the National Theatre for Children, lawn games, educational displays, water tasting contest, award presentations to poster / photography contest winners and more…..Please Join Us!

This year’s program includes both the poster and photography contests. The poster and photography contest are both open to all 4th, 5th and 6th grade students in VT. The DWW Committee is busy working on the details for the 2009 activities. The National Theatre for Children will again be doing performances at elementary schools around the state teaching about source protection and conservation.

Clean, safe drinking water like we all produce every day is important to daily life. Any time is good to celebrate our great product but Drinking Water Week is a great time.

(See “Drinking Water Week” on page 5)

Is Recovery Just Around the Corner?

by Shaun Fielder, VRWA

All of us are shaking our heads these days wondering when the economic recovery will begin. Most likely we are looking at a number of years before full recovery is realized. In the short term, many feel part of the solution to this crisis comes in the form of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (a.k.a. Economic Stimulus bill) as signed by the President on February 17.

Passage of the $787 billion dollar package unfortunately doubled our national deficit and it now approaches $2 trillion dollars. This being said the act will direct funding toward much needed infrastructure investments across our county. Funding of these given projects will salvage or create up to 4 million jobs and hopefully get our economy, pardon the phrase, “flowing again.” History will show if a borrowing strategy of this magnitude will be successful. Putting the political and economic debate aside, experts estimate Vermont’s portion of the bill will salvage or create up to 8000 jobs in-state. We know it will be a busy couple years of project implementation.

While all the details are being ironed out as of the publication of this newsletter we know the economic stimulus funds for our industry will be allocated through two established offices. These are the Vermont office of USDA Rural Development, and VT Department of Environmental Conservation Water Supply and Facilities Engineering Divisions. Officials from the given offices are working diligently on various implementation procedures to properly distribute the two years worth of funding. VT DEC hosted a public hearing to discuss its Intended Use Plan and the DEC approach on March 20. Final details will be released soon. USDA RD is determining their process and procedures at this time.

For additional and up-to-date information on economic stimulus funding opportunities please use the following resources.

For clean water funding options visit; http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/fed/fed.htm or call the Facilities Engineering Division at (802) 241-3404.

For information on funding opportunities for drinking water see: http://www.vermontdrinkingwater.org/grants.htm, or call the Water Supply Division at 241-3404.

For information on VT USDA Rural Development funding opportunities visit their website at; http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/vt/ or call their office at 828-6000.
Since 1982, Vermont Rural Water Association has supported water and wastewater systems across the state. We provide many services, including training, source water protection planning, and onsite assistance.

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20 Susie Wilson Road, Suite B
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-2827
802-660-4988 voice; 866-378-7213 fax
vrwa@vtruralwater.org; www.vtruralwater.org

Contact Our Staff

For onsite assistance and training, contact our technical staff at 800-556-3792 (extensions below):

Phil Acebo, Training Specialist
Ext. 337, pacebo@vtruralwater.org

Brent J. Desranleau, Water Systems Specialist
Ext. 322, bdesranleau@vtruralwater.org

Shaun Fielder, Executive Director
Ext. 315, sfielder@vtruralwater.org

Wayne Graham, Wastewater Specialist
Ext. 319, wgraham@vtruralwater.org

Eric Hanson, Source Protection Specialist
Ext. 327, ehanson@vtruralwater.org

Paula Jackson, Water Systems Specialist
Ext. 332, pJackson@vtruralwater.org

Aaron Perez, Water Systems Specialist
Ext. 331, aperez@vtruralwater.org

Liz Royer, Source Protection Specialist
Ext. 336, lroyer@vtruralwater.org

Ian Schrauf, Water Systems Specialist
Ext. 321, ischrauf@vtruralwater.org

Publication Staff

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Letters

Windham Southwest Supervisory Union

26 January 2009

Vermont Rural Water
20 Susie Wilson Rd., Suite B
Essex, Vermont 05452-2827

Attention: Shawn Fielder, Executive Director

Please accept this letter on behalf of four school districts in the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union for the work and assistance that Ian Schrauf has provided to us regarding meeting compliance in the upgrading of our water system.

Ian met with school officials like myself and business manager Ronda Lackey and also met with several of our school boards in our efforts to comply with the 2005 Vermont Water Supply Rule and pending federal mandate at the end of this calendar year.

He made a seamless transition for us upon the resignation of Elizabeth Walker from the VRWA. His assistance and guidance through the myriad of engineering and construction forgivable loan requirements were exceptionally helpful. His ability to grasp our school districts’ needs for projects already in process (Halifax and Wilmington) and those just beginning (Stamford and Whitingham) has been an invaluable service to us – particularly in the throes of these economic times.

Thank you for making his service available to our town school districts.

Sincerely,

Dr. M. Peter Wright
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Ronda Lackey, WSSU Business Manager

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**Rural Water Fly-In**

By Shaun Fielder, Executive Director

On February 12 all our Directors and I were in Washington D.C. to meet with our Congressional delegation as part of our annual rural water fly-in. All rural water affiliates take part with the goal of securing continued funding support for rural water programs as part of the national budget.

VRWA Directors (l to r), Rod Lamothe, Harry Hinrichsen, Ed Savage, Paul Carroccio, and Richard Desautels.

Given the faltering economy you can imagine there are many demands and requests for funding these days. Our Directors did an outstanding job advocating for rural water and clearly illustrated the value and need for various services we provide in a given year. We can report Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, and Congressman Welch are backers of rural water and we appreciate their continued support.

**VRWA Annual Conference**

We are looking forward to our Annual Conference on May 6th & 7th at the Fairlee Resort. Please find a registration form included in this issue and additional information on our website. We hope you are able to join us for this industry leading event. We have a great golf tournament scheduled, an excellent set of trainings lined up, and our industry partners have already reserved a significant amount of our available booth space. Our business luncheon, annual membership meeting and awards ceremony will take place on the 7th. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

**Water Tasting Contest**

Don’t miss out on the opportunity to claim bragging rights to “Vermont’s Best Tasting Water” and have a chance to compete nationally. Samples will be judged by a distinguished panel at the Drinking Water Week Water Fair on May 8, 2009.

There will be three Water System Categories
- Non Transient Non Community (NTNC)
- Community Surface Water
- Community Ground Water

*Use the application form on page 5.*
On March 20th, 2008 at 4:30 am Ray Counter, Brandon Vermont’s water system chief operator, was awakened to the sound of his phone ring. To his great surprise the call was not the average late night call to a water operator. The caller was the town’s fire chief informing Ray that they were responding to a fire at one of the town’s well houses.

The well house had lost power early the day before so Ray had been running his emergency generator until about six o’clock that evening. In times of emergencies like power outages, Ray manually runs his equipment to insure proper start up and shut down. This turned out to be a very good thing for the fire department and the town. The emergency generator that supplied power to the well house was powered by propane. Part of Ray’s standard operating procedure (SOP) for shutting down the generator is to turn off the gas shut off valve to it. This was done prior to Ray leaving the well house at around 6 pm on the 19th. The fire department chief said that if the gas valve had not been shut off he wouldn’t have had to worry about the pump station because he’d just be looking at a hole in the ground. The fire department determined that the fire started sometime after Ray had shut down the generator, at the point in the wall where the generator’s exhaust exited the building. The fire then slowly worked its way over the roof which, remarkably, did not collapse.

Because of the concrete block construction of the building most of the damage was caused by the heat of the roof fire melting plastic components of the pump system and smoke damage to the building itself.

Once the fire department was on the scene the fire was put out quickly. Ray had the fire department shut the valves inside the building, isolating it from the rest of the water system. Luckily, the pump had not been running during the time of the fire so there were no issues with fire-created contaminants entering the water system. By 2:00 pm water system pumping was resumed from the system’s other two unaffected water sources. Fortunately, due to these other sources, the town was never in danger of running out of water.

Ray and members of the fire district committee initiated the process to rebuild the damaged well house immediately following the fire incident. Planning and engineering took several months. Construction began in early November and is near completion. The well is expected to be back in full operation by the first quarter of 2009 at a total cost of around $300,000 dollars. Thanks to Ray’s quick response to the situation and vigilance in running his equipment in accordance with the established SOPs, the damages to the town’s water system were kept to a minimum. The great moral of this story is that fire and water just don’t mix.
“Drinking Water Week” continued

You might ask “How do I celebrate Drinking Water Week”?
• 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 DWW Sponsor.

If you want to be a sponsor, join our committee, need more information or want to share your ideas, contact Ian Schrauf (ischrauf@vtruralwater.org) at 1-800-556-3792 ext. 321 or Paula Jackson (pjackson@vtruralwater.org)

Additional information on Drinking Water Week can be found at http://vtruralwater.org/industry/DrinkingWaterWeek/index.php

Governor Douglas with the 2008 Vermont Drinking Water Week Poster Contest Winners

Drinking Water Week Water Tasting Contest Application
Sign Me Up!

I will deliver 2 gallons of our water to (Check One):

Montpelier
State House Lawn
May 8th, 2009 by 9 AM

Water Supply Division
Waterbury
May 7th or 8th by 8:30 AM

VRWA Trade Show
Lake Morey Resort
May 7th, 2009

Water System Name__________________________________________________ WSID_____________
Operator Name ___________________________Contact if different______________________________
Phone ______________________________________Fax______________________________________

System Type (Circle One):  CWS Groundwater  CWS Surface Water  NTNC

Mail to: Vermont Drinking Water Week
Water Tasting Contest
89 Main St
Montpelier, VT 05602
This is an article I found that may be of interest to water systems due to the fact that I’ve encountered this issue around the state over the years. –Brent

When residents find particles in their plumbing fixtures, they often bring them to the water plant laboratory for examination. Typically, the material proves to be rust particles. This is normal, because water mains are made of cast iron, and the pipe’s surface rusts over time. Eventually, the rust flakes, and finds its way into household plumbing systems. While harmless, rust can clog the screens in faucets.

The city’s annual hydrant flushing program serves not only to test fire hydrants, but also to flush out rust accumulation in city mains. About 2 years ago, residents began submitting unusual off-white particles, which they removed from their faucet strainers. Accumulation occurred rapidly, necessitating weekly cleaning.

Coincidentally, all of the homeowners reported that they owned new hot water heaters. Since the particles were not reddish in appearance, rust was immediately ruled out.

The suspicion was either calcium carbonate (hardness mineral naturally found in Lake Michigan) which had accumulated in the hot water heater (just as it will in a tea kettle left to boil dry) or breakdown of the hot water heater's sacrificial anode. Such anodes are aluminum or magnesium rods which are built into hot water heaters to prolong the life of the steel tank.

When cracks develop in the tank's glass lining due to high temperatures, rust would quickly destroy the shell.

Anodes prevent this by deteriorating instead. This results in a deposition of calcium carbonate and oxides of the anode’s metals in the bottom of the hot water heater. These are often light in color - often a mottled white-gray-green. This new substance, however was uniform in color.
About two years ago, residents began submitting unusual off-white particles...

Tests designed to confirm normal suspicions failed. Unlike calcium carbonate or metal oxides, this material was insoluble, even in the strongest acids.

Eventually, it was determined that an inferior substance had been used in the hot water heater manufacturing process. Specifically, the company which supplied a component of hot water heaters, the dip tubes, changed from metal to plastic (polypropylene). A dip tube's function is to direct incoming cold water to the bottom of the tank to avoid mixing with (and chilling) the hot water as it is drawn from the top.

All hot water heater manufacturers (A.O Smith, State Rheem etc.) were affected, because plastic ages quickly in a heated environment. In this case, it crumbled into a soft white semi-gelatinous mass, and the deteriorated product floated to the top of the tank and out to the faucet. Now that the mystery substance has been determined, residents should consider if the following conditions are present in their own homes:

- Is the hot water tank relatively new, seven years or less?
- Is the substance appearing in the faucet light in color (egg shell)?
- Is it uniform in color?
- Does it float?
- Does it melt/burn if heated over a flame?

A "Yes" answer to most of these confirms dip tube failure. Local plumbers are now familiar with this problem, and will replace the faulty tube with one constructed from more durable material. In fact, some hot water heater manufacturers are providing replacement tubes, and partial reimbursement for plumber costs.

This article was written by the City of Highland Park, Illinois and is reprinted here with permission.

VRWA Circuit Rider Brent Desranleau can be reached at 802-660-4988 ext. 322
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