Getting the Next Generation in the Game
by Shaun Fielder, Executive Director, VRWA

Last issue I described the economic challenges our country faces and hopes for a quick recovery. An interesting result of the faltering economy is the delayed retirement for many baby boomers in all work sectors, including our industry. While many individuals are delaying their retirement, the fact remains in the next couple years these retirements will take place. A number of sources estimate up to 40 percent of the workforce will move on in the next 5 to 8 years. Because of this, there will be a significant need for competent workers in the environmental field, particularly water and wastewater operations.

One of VRWA’s efforts to prevent this future employee void is to promote our field right now to high school age students. We recently conducted a short presentation to a group of students at the North Country Career Center (NCCC) in Newport and at Montpelier High School. Thank you to EPA Region 1, sponsors of the grant for this pilot project.

If the positive response of the students and others involved is any indication, we are confident this is the start of a very productive outreach effort.

(See “Getting the Next Generation in the Game” on page 7)

Vermont Rule Update
Last Chances to Obtain Money for Testing
By Phil Acebo, VRWA

I hate to bring up the economic realities that we are confronted with and reminded of daily in the media, but it’s real and does affect our lives. When so much of the news is doom and gloom; it’s nice to be able to relay an opportunity to systems to access money for reoccurring expenses related to water system operations.

For the past two and a half years that I’ve been doing training for VRWA; we’ve offered the Vermont Rule Update and Sampling Seminar a couple of times a year at various locales in our state. The focus of the training is an overview of the origins of the Safe Drinking Water Act and many details of Vermont’s Water Supply Rule. The training culminates with proper procedures for sampling to help systems avoid errors that can become both time consuming and costly. This year we are doing four such trainings, one was completed in January, and we have one more coming this spring (June 5th in Enosburgh) and another for the summer.

The Water Supply Rule can be a challenge; however, we are fortunate to have Ellen Parr Doering, Compliance and Certification Manager for the Water Supply Division help participants explore “The Rule” and its interpretation.

Ellen is extremely well versed in “The Rule” both on the state and federal levels, and this is a great opportunity for all to get those questions answered.

The afternoon portion of the training will be conducted by Rod Lamothe of Endyne Inc. Rod will demonstrate the proper techniques for gathering water samples for those required under the Safe Drinking Water Act. We are also privileged to have a chemist familiar with the water industry and testing protocols.

Show me the money!! So here’s the reward part. If you attend this five hour training your system will receive a $500 voucher to be used to lower some of the costs for testing—every little bit helps. This voucher is a one time opportunity for Community Water Systems and Non-Transient Non-Community water systems with a population of 3,300 or less. If you have attended a training session like this in the past; sorry you’re not eligible to receive the voucher. If you can’t remember give Phil a call at 802-660-4988 ext 337.

2009 is the last year for this voucher, so get on board and sign up on our website or by mail. It would be a shame to miss out on this opportunity all our tax dollars provide. There is some good news out there!
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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News Leaks is the official publication of VRWA. It is published quarterly for distribution to operators, owners, managers and board members of water and wastewater systems in Vermont, as well as to association members, water and wastewater service providers, regulators, and other friends. Opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of VRWA.

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Annual Conference
On May 6-7, VRWA hosted its Annual Conference at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee. Nearly 200 attendees enjoyed top-notch training sessions, exhibits and many networking opportunities.

We kicked off the event with our eighth annual golf tournament on the afternoon of May 6th.

During our business luncheon on May 7th, we were pleased to have Joe Liles with us from National Rural Water, who entertained and reminded us of all the good work being done by all associations across the country, including VRWA.

A number of awards were presented to attendees and included; Liz Royer receiving her five-year service pin from VRWA.

Bob Wood of Saputo Cheese was this year’s Tony Torchia Award winner. Congratulations to Bob!

VRWA also honored 73 systems who had reached their 25, 20, 15, 10 and 5 year anniversaries as members of VRWA. Special recognition goes to our 25 year members: Barton Village Water Department, Randolph Fire District #1, Cozy Meadow Mobile Park, and E.J. Prescott, Inc.

We wrapped up the luncheon with our annual membership meeting, at which time VRWA president Ed Savage announced that Rod Lamothe and Harry Hinrichson have been elected by the membership to serve three-year terms as board of directors.

Various prize winners from the event were as follows: VRWA equipment raffle 1st place prize ($500 Shaw’s card) went to Christine Kelly and the 2nd/3rd prizes ($250 Mobil gas cards) went to Russell Anderson and Green Mountain Pipeline. Marty Frizzell of Island Pond was the winner of the 50/50 raffle, benefiting the Water PAC.

Thanks to all our vendors, regulators, and system personnel for making this year’s event another successful one.

VRWA Staff Receive Certifications

Wayne Graham has recently completed the Pipeline and Manhole Assessment and Certification Program User, through Nassco.

Eric Hanson has been certified as a Professional Hydrologist by the American Institute of Hydrology. The mission of American Institute of Hydrology is to enhance and strengthen the standing of hydrology as a science and a profession, and it is the only nationwide organization that offers certification to qualified professionals in all fields of the hydrological sciences. Eric has been working in the field of groundwater in Vermont for over 25 years.

From left to right: Ed Savage (VRWA President), Bob Wood and Shaun Fielder (VRWA Executive Director)

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ROV inspections can be viewed on TV console during inspection & DVD provided. All inspections include bound reports, recommendations and cost estimates.

270-826-9000 Ext. 253
What is Zone 1?

For public community water systems, Zone 1 of the Source Protection Area is generally defined as a 200-foot radius around the well, spring, or surface water intake. This isolation zone may be smaller if approved by the ANR Secretary. Zone 1 should be under water system control.

Why do I need to have control of Zone 1?

This is the area where impacts from contamination are likely to be immediate and certain.

The water system does not have authority to control land uses on any land within the SPA unless they own the land or have specific legal agreements with the landowner. Some towns may have local ordinances with overlay districts that correspond with the SPAs for public water supply sources.

What activities are prohibited in Zone 1?

- Application of nitrogen, pesticides and herbicides
- Buildings other than those required for the water system

What are the Vermont regulations on control of Zone 1?

For public community groundwater systems, the isolation zone around the well needs to be controlled by the water system. Regarding surface water systems, Appendix A Section 3.2.1.1 (b) of the Water Supply Rule indicates that land within a 200 foot isolation zone of the intake (or as approved by the Secretary) shall be owned or legally controlled by the water system.

For new sources, documented control of the isolation zone must be shown by one of the following documents certified by the applicant’s attorney:

1) ownership of the land; or
2) easements with restrictive covenants

Legal control of land uses within the isolation zone by the water system must be tied to the land deeds for all parcels within the well isolation zone and run with the land regardless of future land ownership so long as the source is used for a public water supply.

What if I don’t have control?

Some systems are grandfathered and don’t have control of Zone 1 but should be working towards acquiring legal control. This can be done through options such as land purchase, property easements, conservation restrictions on deeds, and “right of first refusal.” (More on these options in the next issue of Newsleaks!)

What about NTNCs?

Regarding Non-Transient Non-Community water systems (NTNCs), a 200' isolation zone is not required. Isolation distance requirements are presented in Appendix A, Section 11.4 of the Water Supply Rule. These requirements include minimal separation distances from sewage disposal fields, roadways, surface water, buildings, property lines, etc.

Who can I contact for more information?

Vermont Water Supply Division - www.vermontdrinkingwater.org or 802-241-3400
Vermont Rural Water Association - www.vtruralwater.org or 802-660-4988

Look for Part 2 in the Fall issue of Newsleaks.
Operation and Maintenance Manuals or O&M Manuals, as I will refer to them in this article are an integral part of the water system. They should contain source, treatment and storage information, equipment information, standard operating procedures, and much more information. The Water Supply Division has made O&M Manuals a requirement for water systems as part of the Capacity Development program.

Over the past three years I have worked with many water systems, assisting in the development of their O&M Manuals. Some water system’s have old, out-dated O&M Manuals, which can be revised and incorporated in the new O&M Manual. Some systems have no O&M Manual at all, which is most common. It has been “normal practice” in the past to store all the water system information in the water operator’s brain, creating a sense of job security and no guidance for future predecessors.

Starting from scratch can seem like a time consuming project, but is much needed and most helpful for the future of your water system. The Water Supply Division website: www.vermontdrinkingwater.org/wrules.htm has the O&M Manual guidance documents which can be downloaded or printed. The Water Supply Rule, Appendix D contains a list of the pertinent information which must be included in your O&M Manual.

The first step in the process is information gathering. You can contact The Water Supply Division to see what information they have on file. The town clerk’s office may have information and maps. Hopefully there are some water system records you can pull information from, such as your source protection plan. Engineering evaluations are a great source of information. When all else fails, you inventory your system and find the information. This is a great way to get to know your water system. The second step is putting all the information together in an O&M Manual. The O&M Manual guidance sheet from the Water Supply Division will prove very helpful in this step of the process. For assistance with O&M Manuals, contact Paula at 802-660-4988 x332 or email at pjackson@vtruralwater.org
Most public water system operators and administrators in Vermont are familiar with the need for an up-to-date source protection plan for their systems. The purpose of a source protection plan is to identify potential threats to drinking water quality within the source protection area for the water system source(s), a plan to mitigate those threats, and procedures to be followed if the water quality is affected by any of these potential sources of contamination.

In Vermont, a source protection plan is required for all public non-transient non-community water systems, bottled water systems, and public community water systems, and is required to be updated every three years. Primarily, a source protection plan is used as an educational tool to ensure that water system personnel and property owners within the source protection area are aware of the potential sources of contamination and practices that should be followed to minimize the risks to drinking water quality.

However, there may be several public water systems across Vermont that may want to provide an even greater degree of source water protection for their systems to help ensure a safe and reliable drinking water supply for the long haul. An excellent option for such drinking water quality protection for systems with groundwater sources is Class I or II groundwater reclassification. In Vermont, there are four classes of groundwater, Classes I through IV, with Class I applying to the most pristine groundwater with no exposure to water quality risks, to Class IV, which applies to groundwater that is not suitable as a potable source of water, typically as a result of being affected by manmade contamination sources. Currently, all of Vermont’s groundwater is classified as Class III, which is suitable for domestic water supply, except for 10 areas that have been designated as Class IV groundwater, proximal to contaminated sites such as former landfills and hazardous waste sites.

Class I and II groundwater applies to groundwater that has uniformly excellent character and is in use or has a high probability of use as a public water supply source. Currently, there are no Class I or II groundwater designations in Vermont. As of August 2008, there is an updated Procedure for Class I and Class II Groundwater Reclassification that has been issued by the Department of Environmental Conservation Water Supply Division. This is available on-line at http://www.vermontdrinkingwater.org/GWPRS/FINAL_Class_I-II_Procedure_2008.pdf. This procedure document describes in detail the steps necessary for Class I or II groundwater reclassification. In practice, it is most likely that Class I or II designation would be sought by municipal water systems in an effort to protect groundwater quality for existing water system sources and potential future water supply sources that would be needed to accommodate population growth.

What are the benefits of reclassification? As discussed previously, a source protection plan serves as an excellent tool for drinking water quality protection efforts, primarily through education. Class I or II designation, however, can provide an enhanced degree of groundwater protection for municipal and other public water systems through the following processes:

- Added authority to evaluate and monitor land uses through state permitting programs, and the evaluation of risks associated with these permitted land uses
- Heightened awareness and citizen involvement with local groundwater quality protection efforts
- Providing a sound basis for local planning and land use regulations
- Perhaps most importantly, providing a mechanism for groundwater quality protection in areas not currently used for public water system sources, but which have a high probability of such use by a municipality as demonstrated through specific steps to develop future public water supply sources.

Continued on next page.
Petitions for Class I or II groundwater reclassification must include a written report. In many instances, the information required in the report (e.g., public water system yield and demand, potential sources of contamination, water quality characteristics) is information that the water system already has in place. Therefore, systems with scientifically-delineated source protection areas, which include most public community water systems in Vermont, likely already have much of the information required for a petition for Class I or II groundwater reclassification. With the assistance of VRWA, interested municipal and public water system personnel are welcome to prepare and submit a petition to the Groundwater Coordinating Committee of the Agency of Natural Resources for Class I or II groundwater reclassification. VRWA highly recommends this step for municipalities who are planning for protection of the groundwater quality of their existing, and potential future, water supply sources, and is happy to help with the preparation of petitions.

Our in-school presentations showcased the important role operators play for their respective communities. Various images were presented to show the varied tasks operators take on in a given day. At the NCCC presentation, Newport City official Tom Bernier joined us, to offer some comments to the students in attendance. A tour of the Montpelier water treatment facility is currently being organized for those students who took part in the presentation at Montpelier High School.

We hope to expand upon this pilot project in the future and design a training program specifically for students. We are confident some additional specialized training on water and wastewater topics would prepare many to take the state water and wastewater exams. Wouldn’t it be something if in the future Vermont high school students had a water or wastewater certification in hand at graduation time! They could approach a given system and say, “I have my certificate and I want to work in the field, do you have any positions open?” I know a number of systems would be interested in getting this next generation in the game.
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