

Vermont Rural Water Association....Supporting Water and Wastewater Systems since 1982

Managing Change

by Shaun Fielder

I recently attended a Farm Bill Listening Forum hosted by USDA Rural Development. At the forum, Under Secretary Tom Dorr spoke about the process of change. He noted that as we enter the 21st century, change is a given. It represents some significant costs but also some great opportunities. Like it or not, you don't have the opportunity to stand still. It is best to be involved with the process of change and make it work for you.

Our association is moving forward while managing a significant number of changes at this time. As most of you know, the former Northeast Rural Water Association offered services in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. In early September, our major funding partner, National Rural Water Association, stopped funding our programs in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This significantly reduced the programs in these states. While New Hampshire Rural Water Association and Massachusetts Rural Water Association still exist, they are under-funded and may be dissolved in the near future.

Our former co-workers in those respective states have taken positions with other, similar organizations and continue to work hard assisting water and wastewater systems in their states. These individuals worked beside us as co-workers and friends and will be missed. In Massachusetts, they include: Mike Heidorn, Dave Kaczinski, Richard Kilhart, Michael Leach, Rebekah

McDermott, and Ian Schrauf. From New Hampshire, they include: Donny Boynton, Scott Clang, Jay Matuszewski, Jennifer Palmiotto, Heather Shaw, and Jack Shields.

In addition, Massachusetts Director Peter Leidt, Executive Director Michael Wood-Lewis and Association Specialist Heather Shea have left our association. We wish them all the best and future success.

Vermont Rural Water Association is fully staffed and all Vermont communities and systems will continue to receive our invaluable services without interruption. In fact, as of the release of this newsletter we expect to have a full-time wastewater position starting January 1, 2006 (the current position is half-time). In addition, we hope to add other positions in the future.

At a recent meeting, an operator said, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way." This is good advice—and leading is the *best* tact if you intend to find the opportunities created by change. All of us at VRWA intend to lead this organization forward and continue to find new ways to serve the water and wastewater systems of Vermont. We will continue to offer technical support, continuing education, and the advice needed to keep up with the changes of the 21st century. We look forward to working with you in 2006 and beyond. ■



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New ANSI/NSF Standard 60 Certifications for Sodium Hypochlorite

by Elizabeth Walker

This is a follow-up to an article I wrote a year ago concerning the use of sodium hypochlorite. Since that time, a popular name brand (Clorox) has received the ANSI/NSF Standard 60 certification from the Water Quality Association (WQA) for two of their products. The Vermont Water Supply Division now accepts certifications from WQA along with three other organizations.

This should make many very small community and NTNC systems happy as they can now purchase smaller volumes and lower strength products locally.

There are four companies that are certified for testing in accordance with the ANSI/NSF Standard 60 (Drinking Water Treatment Chemicals—Health Effects). There could be other off-the-shelf brands besides Clorox that have this certification, although after checking in several of the large chain stores,

Continued on page 4.



Roadside springs—harmless or a public health problem? See page 5.

Happy Holidays from Vermont Rural Water!

Who We Are

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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Letters

I would like to thank VRWA for your support to our water project. We have just completed a \$5 million dollar water project which included a 190,000 gallon water storage tank, 5 miles of new 8" and 12" water mains, a new booster pump station, and a new (replacement) well. This has been a long, two-year process.

This project needed a lot of help. Erik Peterson has been a great help to us. Erik helped find water lines that we could not locate and water leaks that needed to be found. We used Erik a great deal. When we had our last construction meeting, we invited Erik to join us and I presented Erik with a plaque with a piece of 120 year old wooden water line on it, thanking Erik for all he had done for the West Rutland Water Department. VRWA should be proud to have someone like Erik to help water systems throughout Vermont. I would like to also thank you all for the training that you people offer to water systems.

Sincerely,

Edward Gilman, Sr., Water Commissioner, Town of West Rutland

The purpose of this letter is to let you know how much I appreciate all the help that Kevin McGraw and Elizabeth Walker have given our school.

Elizabeth has spent numerous hours helping me fill out loan applications so that we can install our new water system that is being required by the state at minimal cost to the school. Without her help I would have been totally lost! She also has me headed in the right direction to complete our Operator's Manual.

Kevin just completed our Source Protection Plan update and it is beautifully presented and a true masterpiece! I just mailed the final copy to the State this morning.

All contacts that I have had with the state in completing the application process have been positive. I believe it is because we have worked so closely with your organization.

Thank you,

Jill Chaffee, Principal, Albany Community School, Albany

A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Members...

"Big W" Weber's MHP
Home Hill Inn
Hopedale Water
Weston & Sampson Engineers



VRWA Staff

From left to right: Erik Peterson, Shaun Fielder, Heather Shea, Kevin McGraw, Liz Royer, Brent Desranleau, Elizabeth Walker. Not shown: Doris Dastalto, Melissa Green, Paula Jackson, Sarah MacMillan, and Vinnie Melendez.



Rural Water News

Vermont Drinking Water Week:

How You Can Participate

by Elizabeth Walker

Vermont Drinking Water Week (DWW) will be held May 7-13, 2006. This year's theme is "Who's Behind The Faucet." This theme is about you the operator, lab technician, clerk, board member, and all those that contribute to providing customers with safe drinking water.

The Water Fair is scheduled for Friday, May 12 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 winners and more.

The DWW Committee is busy working on the programs and plans on having the website updated with current information by the end of January. If you can spare the time and want to participate as a committee member, we meet the 2nd Wednesday of the month.

If you do not have the time and wish to be a sponsor, we welcome financial support and recognition is given. Financing this program is one of the most difficult aspects of putting on the DWW activities. We are currently under-funded by about \$1,000 and are seeking additional contributions from systems and vendors.

Another way you can help us with the DWW celebration is to contact your local school about participating in the poster contest and attending the Water Fair. This year's theme is perfect for giving tours of your system or going into a classroom to share what you do. Maybe you want to have the National Theatre for Children do a performance at your school during DWW week. We are very interested in knowing of any programs such as open houses and school presen-

tations you may do locally.

Contact Elizabeth Walker at ewalker@vruralwater.org or leave a message at 800-556-3792 ext. 321 if you want to be a sponsor, join our fun committee or share your ideas.

Feedback Needed!

On Friday, February 10, VRWA will host its Annual Symposium at the Vermont Technical College in Randolph. The meeting runs from 9am-12pm, with lunch to follow. Come discuss the needs of Vermont's water systems with other operators, managers, and regulators.

The Rural Water staff will also be looking for feedback on our current programs and your opinions on what types of training and onsite assistance are needed in the year ahead. There will also be a short membership meeting.

To attend, please RSVP to 800-556-3792 or to vrwa@vruralwater.org by January 31.

Save the Date

Vermont Rural Water will hold our annual conference on May 17-18, 2006 at the beautiful Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. Join us for a fun afternoon of golf on May 17 and for the trade show and training sessions on May 18.

Best of Luck

Executive Director Michael Wood-Lewis left VRWA in October to pursue new opportunities. In his five years with Rural Water, Michael worked with directors, members, staff and our many partners to grow and strengthen our services and programs. We thank him for his hard work and extraordinary dedication to our mission.

Association Specialist Heather Shea also moved on in October and is planning on entering graduate school in the spring. Her can-do attitude will be sore-

ly missed!

Best wishes from the staff to Michael and Heather.

Call for Nominations

It's time for our annual election! Two seats on the VRWA Board of Directors will be up for election. The Board meets quarterly and sets the direction for the association.

Please consider volunteering your time to help us forward our mission! Self-nominations are accepted.

Director Nomination Form

VRWA Directors are representatives of member systems that are elected for three-year terms by the membership. Nominations can only be made by current members. Nominations must be received no later than **January 31, 2006**.

Name of Nominee _____

Member System that Nominee represents _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Nominee Qualifications: Please list any relevant experience, licenses/certifications, awards, etc. on a separate sheet.

Nominee Statement: Why is the Nominee interested in becoming a VRWA Director? (Attach a short response on a separate sheet.)

Name & system of person making nomination, if different from nominee: _____

Mail form to: VRWA, 187 St. Paul Street, Burlington, VT 05401-4689

they did not have any other product that met the ANSI/NSF Standard 60 certifications. A small local grocery store may have a different brand that carries the certification.

The label may not necessarily indicate that the product has the certification or carry the organization logo so it is important to go the appropriate website and print out a copy of the webpage that specifies that the company and product name is certified. Keep this in your files or post it where material is stored. When a sanitary survey is conducted you will likely be asked for this information.

To the right is a table of the organizations, their contact information and logo. Remember if the logo is not on the label, it does not necessarily mean the product is not certified. All products by any given company may not be certified; please be sure the specific product you want to use is certified. Scented bleaches or bleaches with other additives would not be certified.

Doing a search of the websites can be somewhat of a challenge so the following will help you find what you need a little more easily:

- For CSA International, you can go to the website and do a word search from main page, but I was unable to locate certifications for any water treatment chemicals.

- For NSF, go to: <http://nsf.org/certified/PwsChemicals/> then just type in the product name or type.

- For United Laboratories, click on Certifications from their main website (on the left toolbar). Then click on Keyword Search (listed under General Search) and type in the chemical name. Click on Link to File for specific information on products by listed company.

- For the Water Quality Association, go to the main webpage and click on Product Certification (on the left toolbar). Then select Product Listing (bottom of right toolbar).

There you have it; just remember to handle and store these chemicals safely. Also remember to pay attention to the

Company Name	Contact Information	Logo on Product
CSA International	178 Rexdale Boulevard Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M9W 1R3 800-463-6727 www.csa-international.org	
NSF International	789 Dixboro Rd. Ann Arbor, MI 48105 734-769-5143 www.nsf.org	
Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.	333 Pfingsten Road Northbrook, IL 60062 847-272-8800 x42418 www.ul.com	
Water Quality Association	4151 Naperville Rd Lisle, IL 60532 630-505-9637 www.wqa.org	

strength solution you are using and adjust your mixing and feed rates accordingly. Contact Vermont Rural Water Association with any questions or concerns. ■



Elizabeth Walker, VRWA Water Systems Specialist, can be reached at ext. 321, or at ewalker@vtruralwater.org



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Roadside Springs Eternal

But Can You Drink the Water?

by Jon Vara

There's a fine roadside spring on the side of Route 14 a mile or two south of Hardwick. The water gushes out of an iron pipe into a round granite bowl that must once have served as a watering trough for horses. There's usually a waterlogged board resting across the bowl to support visitors' water jugs while they're filling.

Quite a few area residents rely on the spring for their household drinking water. I'm not one of them, but whenever I ride past on my bicycle, I stop to replace the warm water in my bottle with cold, sweet spring water.

That's what I was doing one day last summer when a car with out-of-state plates pulled onto the paved shoulder next to the spring. The driver was friendly and asked me about the water. Was it provided by the town, or maybe the State of Vermont? I had to admit I didn't know. Was the water good to drink? I assured her that it was.

"What about that sign?" the woman asked. She was pointing at the official-looking notice posted above the outflow:

WATER NOT TESTED—BOIL OR CHEMICALLY TREAT BEFORE USE.

I didn't know what to say. I'd seen the sign before, but I'd never given it much thought. "Everyone drinks here," I said finally. "I've never heard of anyone having a problem."

She looked doubtful, but a few minutes later, as I turned to go, I saw her take a cautious sip from a cupped hand. I waved goodbye and began pedaling up the hill toward Woodbury.

The experience piqued my curiosity. I knew of perhaps a dozen roadside springs in Vermont and had drunk from several, but I realize the I knew next to

nothing about their origins. And what about those warning signs? Was the water safe to drink or not? I made some phone calls that eventually led to a series of water-tasting excursions to springs around the state.

Conversations with several Vermont historians confirmed my initial hunch about the origins of most springs: They're remnants from the age of horse travel, when water, not gasoline, was what kept traffic moving. In addition to keeping up the roads themselves, local road crews ran pipes—or simple V-



A roadside spring in Johnson.

shaped wooden troughs made from boards—to let water flow by gravity to where horses and other livestock could reach it.

Given the slow pace and the absence of convenience stores, the same spring water also quenched the thirst of human travelers. As horses gave way to the automobile, many springs apparently fell into disuse, but others—presumably those yielding the best-tasting water—were kept up and continue flowing to this day.

And in Vermont, faith in spring water runs deep. Before modern well-

drilling equipment, the best drinking water available invariably came from natural springs. (The shallow dug wells that were the only real alternative tended to collect warm, bacteria-laden runoff.) Today, despite the availability of safe drinking water from private drilled wells and municipal water supplies, the association of spring water with coldness and purity is still with us.

That association may also owe something to distant folk memories from the mid-19th century, when health seekers flocked to Vermont hotels celebrated for

their healing waters. And although it's doubtful that anyone today believes that spring water can cure everything from scrofula to piles, the feeling seems to linger that spring water can't possibly hurt you and just might be good for you.

The attitude of a fellow I spoke with at the spring on Route 116 in Middlebury was typical. "I live in Cornwall, and our water at home is just ok," he said, moving a full jug out from under the outflow pipe and replacing it with an empty one.

"We started getting our drinking

water here a couple of years ago because the quality is so much better.” That attitude is the source of considerable frustration at the Vermont Department of Health, where epidemiologist Susan Schoenfeld points out that water from a roadside spring is more likely to cause illness than cure it.

“People love to think of untreated spring water as all natural,” she says. “What they don’t realize is that it can also be full of natural bacteria and viruses.”

The problem, Schoenfeld explains, is that although water may be perfectly pure where it bubbles out of the ground—thanks to the filtering action of the sand and gravel that most spring water passes through on its way to the surface—it’s easily contaminated with surface runoff once it emerges.

She ticks off the names of some waterborne organisms known to cause nasty stomach complaints: Giardia. Cryptosporidium. Campylobacter. “They live in the digestive tracts of wild and domestic animals,” she says.



A typical warning sign at a spring in Johnson.

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“Wherever you’ve got animals and surface water, the water is going to contain pathogens.”

Although no case of waterborne illness been traced to a roadside spring, the Health Department has reviewed cases in which it considered that likely. So, it does what it can to discourage consumption by posting one of two warning signs at popular watering spots. In addition to the boil-or-chemically-treat version, there’s another—seemingly more legal than medical—that declares that THE STATE OF VERMONT CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR QUALITY OF WATER. (I noticed that on at least two of these signs, a thirsty libertarian had added “or anything else” in black lumber crayon.)

As my spring visits continued, it was easy to see that the health people had a point. When I followed the green plastic pipe at the Middlebury spring to its source, I found that it led to a shallow, open pool between some rocks. The fellow I’d talked to a few moments before

might have been genuinely concerned about water quality, but his household had apparently been drinking spring-fed puddle water for years.

I did encounter a few springs that seemed to be adequately protected from intruding surface water. The spring along Route 100A in Plymouth, for example, a mile or so north of the Coolidge Historic Site, is enclosed in a handsome mortared-stone springbox. The popular Johnson Cold Spring—just off Route 15 at the east end of the village of Johnson—also looked well protected to me, as did a little spring along Route 14, just north of the village of East Brookfield.

But most of the springs I visited used the same pipe-in-a-pool design as the one in Middlebury. The pipe from the Route 30 spring in Winhall was nearly clogged with fallen leaves until I cleared them out. Water striders were skating around the placid surface of the tiny spring beside Route 302, just west of the junction with the Groton Forest Road

(Route 232). There was a drowned earthworm in the popular Lucky 7 spring along the Lincoln-Ripton road.

Given the possible risks, why do people continue to drink from roadside springs? Some drinkers, no doubt, don’t realize that there is any risk. Their assumptions about the water from their local spring are the same as their assumptions about packaged spring water from a supermarket: that it is reliably pure and wholesome. These are the people the Health Department worries about, and you can’t blame them. A few others drink there from necessity.

But I suspect that most patrons of Vermont’s roadside springs, like me, are what might be called recreational drinkers: We know that the water isn’t perfectly safe, but we believe that the rewards of drinking outweigh the risks.

This article originally appeared in a longer version in the Winter 2005 issue of Vermont Life magazine. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author.

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