

January 18, 2018 GWCC Meeting

Attendees: Scott Stewart, Robert Pelosi, Craig Heindel, Jon Kim, Lydia, Lee, Miles Waite, Sille Larsen, Colin Dowey, Cary Giguere, Patti Casey, Linda Buccuzzo, Rodney Pingree, Kasey Kathan, Liz Royer, Zeno Levy, Michael Smith, Marjie Gale, Kira Jacobs (by phone)

Introductions:

Welcome to Colin, Patti and Zeno!

- *Colin Dowey* is working for the Geologic Survey, primarily on the 2-year USGS water use grant. Currently working on projects like verifying and correcting the well location database and looking at snowmaking water withdrawals in conjunction with the watershed management division.

Craig suggested that part of this work be developing a simple procedure that would allow consultants to report errors and correct well locations. Rodney pointed out that Ken Yelsey is the current contact for reporting errors and correcting the database. **Note: following meeting Scott met with Colin and IT staff to work on development of a tool or feature in the Atlas to allow public to provide info and submit corrections that would be reviewed by staff before making the appropriate database changes. More to come...**

- *Patti Casey* is Jeff Comstock's replacement and is currently primarily working on developing a protocol and notification practice for farm coordinators taking water quality samples and updating the Department's water quality database. This has included notifying any PAL exceedance that has been reported within the database and completing a formal notification for every current sample.

Craig asked if the database was available to the public, Patti's response was no, and there are no plans to make it public. Per statute the information in the database is protected (contains private homeowner information). Craig went on to question if a consultant were involved in a project where that information would be useful, is there a method to obtain it? Ag. does have ways of aggregating data or could ask individual homeowners if release of the data would be acceptable.

- *Zeno Levy* is working in DWGPD on source protection updates and reaching out to municipalities. Primarily interested in developing proactive strategies for protection. His background is in hydrogeology and he obtained his PhD at Syracuse University this June.

Question of whether this was a new position, and the response was that the position was a redescription of Dennis Nealon's position, but there was a change of role associated with this transition. Kira highlighted that partnerships are key for completing this type of work and she has great appreciation for the support Zeno's position brings.

Updates

- *NEGSA* (Jon Kim) – It's coming up! Schedule was released last Friday with 26 themed sessions, Jon circulated a listing of the sessions, but they can also be found at the link below by clicking on the 'meeting app' button (below the registration button):
https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Events/Section_Meetings/GSA/Sections/ne/2018mtg/home.aspx

Of particular interest to this group may be the *Applications of Geoscience to Government and*

Community Issues convened by Marjie and others, and the full day session on *Private Wells: Current Challenges and Opportunities* convened by Sille, Liz, Patti and Paul Susca (NH DES) and Joe Ayotte (USGS)

- *Groundwater Protection Council* (Kira Jacobs) – in Boston this past September, included a workshop ahead of the conference on source water protection, including a discussion by Marji on ‘how to work with your state geologist’. Overall, well received, with lots of good New England themed presentations. (presentations can be found [here](#)).

Marjie noted that the conference highlighted potential sources of federal funding, particularly for agriculture and soils based work. Also, it was noted that there was a discussion on working with state conservationists. Liz noted that Vermont’s state conservationist (Vicky Drew) is very interested in groundwater issues and that the next state technical meeting is **January 24th in Colchester** (go [here](#) for more details).

- *De-Icing Conference* (Rodney, Scott, Sille) – generally lots of focus on surface water and minimal on groundwater. One study was presented from work in the Adirondacks looking at monitoring groundwater between the point of application and a surface water stream. Significant outreach could be done to address the groundwater concern. Sille noted that NH regulations have provided liability protection if it can be demonstrated that salt application rates by an entity are in conformance with state recommendations. This has resulted in significant reductions in salt application within the State.

PFAS

- Michael – Bennington work generally progressing well, eastern side of the area is still up for discussion as to contamination source. Some detections occurring downgradient of metal plating plants.
- Sille – new [article](#) has been released addressing the derivation of PFOA health standards
- Scott – Pownal Fire district is still in negotiations regarding land acquisition of location of replacement supply.
- Kasey – landfill leachate and wastewater treatment plant sampling recently occurred, POET system has been installed for adjacent residential supply at municipal landfill and significant fluctuations (20 ppt to 100 ppt) seen at another municipal landfill monitoring location.
- General discussion on sampling standards, ACM is outdated, 537 only for drinking water and a new standard may be coming this spring

Groundwater Protection Rule and Strategy

Draft is in place and awaiting finalization of the tables. Primarily looking at keeping or removing some pesticides. Once completed the draft will be provided to the GWCC and to Agencies. The Agencies will be invited to a workshop, likely in the first weeks of February (at least two-week notice will be given before the workshop). ICAR filing will follow the workshop. No formal public comment period will occur until after ICAR. Additionally, a draft of the Procedure for Class IV Reclassification has been developed to incorporate the process that is being proposed in the draft Rule. This procedure could be used for reclassification that may occur prior to the rules being adopted (likely Bennington PFAS area).

Question of whether changes (lowering) to the standards will cause sites to be reopened – no, as is laid out in the IROCP.

Dept. of Health Updates

- The Dept. of Health website now has memos on how VHA and VALS are established for drinking water, indoor air and soil (thanks to Razell).
- A VHA has been established for lead, different from the action level, at the lab detection limit 1ppb. The development of the VHA was in anticipation/response to lead testing at schools and the understanding that no lead is safe. Discussion followed on how this would be incorporated into rules (drinking supply rule). Note in an email follow up after the meeting, Sille clarified:

“At the meeting Thursday, I mentioned the new lead health advisory (HA) and the question was raised whether or not the lead HA of 1ppb was at the tap or at the source. Just to answer the question formally and maybe add it to the minutes, the lead HA is at tap and source, it doesn’t matter.”

“The HA for lead was the result of conversations with various partners in which the AL of 15 ppb was referred to as a health-based or Health Department number. There is no reference dose for lead because EPA could not identify a threshold. Therefore, the health-based level for lead in water is 0 ppb. The HA is set to the detection level for lead in water, which is our process for establishing a HA when the detection level is higher than the health-based level.”

- Recently received a request from consultant on whether the state would be interested in doing a pilot project on the use of reclaimed water (consultant may have already talked to Brian Harrington as well)
 - Craig - ~15 years ago the issue was heavily discussed, the Dept. of Health had significant concern on the treatment process and pathogens.
 - Sille – Current attitude seems that pilot projects might be okay, if it could get permitted and there was associated monitoring that Health could then use in evaluation.
 - General discussion on reclaimed water used as carriage water (Sharon rest-area, Killington snowmaking etc.)
- Working to develop a web tool where private well owners can enter results and the tool interprets the data, provides solutions and responses. (see “Be Well Informed” developed with e-enterprise)

Media coverage of agricultural impacts on nitrate contamination

- General feeling that there was mischaracterization incorporated into the VPR story, including the interpretation of the data. There are 16 long-term monitoring sites that are regularly sampled, because they are known to have issues. The interpreted data set didn’t have these samples differentiated and each sample was treated as unique location/samples. In reevaluation of the dataset, looking at 10 years of data and about 1,000 wells, approximately 2% show impact. Nationally, about 20% of wells are impacted in agricultural land-base.
- This process has highlighted the need for a better data management system. Currently using a 1980s IBM Informix, have tried others in the past but nothing has worked as well.
- If a request is made for sampling, the department will test. If nitrates are found, treatment would be established, and land use changes would be implemented. It’s up to the Department to make the tie back to an individual farm and in some cases farms have paid for treatment.
- Craig – with the new RAPs and nutrient management plans being applied to smaller farms is it thought that conditions may improve? Cary – Nutrient management Plans primarily focus on phosphorous, so likely only minimal impact. Nitrate can be included but isn’t explicitly. The RAP’s also have increased buffer distances and herbicide application which may impact.
- Sille – on the Dept. of Ag [website](#) there’s a pie chart showing nitrate detections, but when compared to the general population data available through health, there’s significant differences (more in the Ag data set). Patti – the data shown on the website includes things that aren’t supply wells (dug wells, tile drains etc.), when those sample locations are removed from the datasets, the detections decrease significantly.

- Kira – because of the media coverage this issue has garnered attention from senior managers at the EPA, particularly new regional administrator Alexandra Dunn. Briefing is occurring Friday 1/19 on the issue, they'll likely be looking for ways to help – suggestions? New database. Kira suggested looking at what New Hampshire has done with One-stop reporting. EPA has funds to help improve environmental databases, but Kira isn't sure how this may/may not apply to Ag needs, could be supported if Ag and DEC collaboration could be evidenced.

Potential merger with the water well advisory committee

Governor's office is looking for ways to streamline government and find efficiencies, one proposal currently in legislature is consolidation of committees. This includes a proposal to merge the water well advisory committee (WWAC) with either the technical advisory committee (TAC) or the GWCC, as TAC only tangentially deals with potable wells, the GWCC is the more logical. WWAC has set terms for membership (appointed) and it has been difficult to get members appointed and convene meetings. Merging with a larger group may provide better opportunity for them to voice concerns, which will likely be primarily on construction standards, but also other groundwater issues.

Environmental Notice Board

Provided general introduction to the new environmental notice board (ENB, live as of January 1st). The ENB will be used for all DEC public notice process (including permits and corrective action plans). It features a subscription service option which provides auto-notification for preselected options (e.g. particular permit types, regions of interest).

For more info visit:

<http://dec.vermont.gov/permits/enb>

GWCC in 2018

The Groundwater Management Plan (which should be finalized soon) includes implementation plans which can guide some of the GWCC work in the coming year. These documents will be sent around for review prior to the February meeting. Time at the February meeting will be dedicated to discussing these and developing some action goals, and prioritizing tasks for the groups, so review the implementation plans and bring other ideas.