

MAINE WATER NEWS

January 2003

Number 109

Public Water is Important

David Parent, President

Stating the importance of public water is certainly preaching to the choir in our crowd. Would anyone argue with the premise that water for public consumption is the highest priority use of our supplies? Over the next few years, the association will find itself arguing that simple fact over and over again in Augusta. The real question will be just where we end up in a long list of priorities. Last year the Maine Legislature passed LD1488 (PL 619), a bill which requires water users to report water withdrawals to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). That part doesn't sound bad, especially since water supplies are exempt (we already report our water withdrawal to a state agency). The bill also, however, requires the DEP to adopt rules by January 5th, 2005 that: "establish water use standards for maintaining in-stream flows and GPA lake or pond water levels that are protective of aquatic life and other uses and that establish criteria for designating watersheds most at risk from cumulative water use." This will be one of the most significant regulations that water suppliers in the state have had to deal with in many years. We need to get this one right.

Note that I labeled us as Public Water Supplies, not Public *Drinking* Water Supplies. This is an important distinction. Although we do provide public drinking water, it is most often one of the lesser uses of the water that we provide. That may be painfully driven home by some of the participants of this debate. As we all know, however, the other uses of our water are also very important. Sanitation - water for cleaning, washing, flushing toilets, and other sanitary uses - is perhaps as important as clean drinking water from a public health standpoint. Large users in most water systems usually include hospitals and schools, who use the majority of their water for sanitary purposes. In other parts of the world, the lack of water for sanitary purposes often presents as great a risk of disease as the lack of safe drinking water. I would also argue that industrial uses are very important to our communities. Industrial users provide

jobs and add to the tax base of communities, which should be considered both an important and beneficiary use of water. Industrial users also provide an important source of income to water utilities, helping to keep rates affordable for all customers. Then there are what are often considered to be the more wasteful uses of water, such as lawn watering and car washing. These are conveniences however, that, within reason, we should be able to offer our customers. As with industrial usage, it provides us with additional revenues that help keep water rates affordable for all customers. Water used for the maintenance of our water systems and water used for fighting fires are also both very important uses of water. And the list could go on.

In Maine we are lucky not to have the problems that many other states face. We have many basins and sources to draw from. Some states have single bodies of water, watersheds, or basins that not only need to supply water to the most of a state, but that are also depended upon by other states once they flow over the border. Competition for priority of use is fierce, both between public water supplies and other users of water such as agriculture. That is not happening in Maine, at least not with public water supplies. In addition to that, many of the supplies that will have issues with an in-stream flow standard are located near the coast, so the portion of the watershed that is affected by their withdrawal is negligible in some cases. There are many factors unique to Maine that call for a long hard look before any regulation happens, especially if the intent is to model regulation after those in other states.

The association has been following this for several years now. We helped prevent an 11th hour bill from slipping through the cracks last year that would have implemented seriously restrictive regulations. The Water Resources Committee has attended the various workgroup and committee meetings that have been working on this rule, and have had great success keeping a handle on it. We are lucky to have a group of very capable people serving on the Water Resources Committee; they are ideal for dealing

Maine Water News
is published bimonthly by
Maine Water Utilities Association
Jeffrey L. McNelly, Editor
1419 Old Route One
P.O. Box P
Waldoboro, Maine 04572-0917
(207) 832-2263
(207) 832-2265 FAX
e-mail: mwua@midcoast.com
website: www.mwua.org

Material of interest to the water supply profession will be considered for publication. Copy deadline: 15th day of month preceding publication.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

David Parent *Sanford Water District*

First Vice President

Jeffrey LaCasse *Kennebec Water District*

Second Vice President

Normand Labbe *Kennebunk, K'port,
& Wells Water District*

James W. West *Portland Water District*

Scott Minor *Augusta Water District*

Judy Kelley *Consumers Maine Water Co.*

Michael Nadeau *S. Berwick Water District*

Education and Operations Committee

Co-Chair Education: Joan McArdle - Yarmouth Water

Co-Chair Operations: Mike Morey, Augusta Water

Legislative Committee

Chair: Rick Knowlton - Consumers Maine Water Co.

Nominating Committee

Chair: Rick Knowlton - Consumers Maine Water Co.

Program Committee

Chair: Greg Reed - Bangor Water District

Public Awareness Committee

Chair: Mary Jane Dillingham - Auburn Water District

Water Resources Committee

Chair: Terry Trott - Augusta Water District

(cont. from p. 1)

with what is often a very technical issue. Within the next month or two, the committee will be putting together a strategy on this issue. The legislation last year gave DEP the authority to write a rule that they have wanted to create for some time now. Even though they have until 2005 to promulgate

the rule, David VanWie of the DEP was quick to point out it was a deadline; the rule may come sooner than that.

The association will most likely have to address some controversial issues along the way to negotiate a final rule that we can all live with. Conservation, unaccounted for water and responsible water use will most likely be debated in the process and may be part of the final rule. The association, along with affected suppliers, will need to decide where we stand on issues for which consensus is hard to reach. Standing together with a united, responsible and sensible position is the only way to assure our voices will be heard on this.

The regulation of interim stream flows and GPA lake and pond levels has the potential to threaten the use of many of our sources of supply in the state. It has the potential to force water suppliers to turn to alternative sources to augment their supplies, thus impacting many more bodies of water with regulation and withdrawals than are impacted currently. Conservation might become mandatory and industrial uses may be viewed as a waste of a resource. The impact of a drought will become greater and much more frustrating as suppliers try to comply with mandatory releases from their reservoirs which at times may exceed the flow feeding them. These are not exaggerated scenarios, they are stories told by water suppliers in neighboring New England states. Such regulations could also be our ally, however, preventing upstream uses that may compete with public water supplies. In many states across the country, the regulation of water withdrawals is necessary to maintain flows to public water supplies.

In summary, we need to get this one right. The membership needs to get involved, and stay involved, especially if your source is one of the dozen or so that will be seriously impacted. This will be a long process, there is no quick fix and there is no easy fix. Public water supplies need a rule that they can live with and that makes sense, not one that jeopardizes the use of high quality sources.

The December Meeting

We have the December down south so as to avoid early snowstorms. Well, for 2 of the last 3 years we have driven through snow to get to the meeting, although this year was not as bad as the Sanford meeting in 2000.

Following a welcome from North Berwick Town Manager Dwayne Morin and an overview of the North Berwick Water District by Superintendent Bruce Hackett, we were caught up on the news as Nancy Beardsley provided a regulatory update, Rick Knowlton reported the results of the election of Directors and the committee chairs summarized the previous year's accomplishments and anticipated activities for 2003.

The technical program focused on sprinkler systems and featured Eric Ellis of the Fire Marshall's Office, Gary Darling of Eastern Fire Sprinkler Company and Franz Haase of WIRSBO Sprinkler Systems. At one point the program got precipitously close to taking on the appearance of a resurrected Private Fire Protection Task Force meeting, but the moderator was able to steer it back on course.

It was a good day in a nice part of the state and a fitting way to wrap up the year and look forward to 2003.

The State of Maine Operator Exams will be held on April 1, 2003 at the State Armory on Western Avenue in Augusta and on April 3, 2003 at the Northern Maine Technical Center in Presque Isle.

Applications and fees must be postmarked no later than midnight Saturday, February 15, 2003.

The fall exams will be held on October 21, 2003 at the State Armory on Western Avenue in Augusta and on October 23, 2003 at the Northern Maine Technical Center in Presque Isle. Applications must be postmarked no later than midnight Saturday, September 6, 2003.

The announcement, application and other information can be found on the Drinking Water Program's website at <http://www.medwp.com>.

The Drinking Water Program now has an EPA grant for operator licensing and training. Under this grant, the fees for up to three exams will be waived for operators who work at water system under 3,300 population. Questions concerning the exams, fee waivers or other issues should be directed to Roger Crouse at 287-5684 or Carol Champagne at (207) 287-5699 or carol.champagne@maine.gov.

Members Elect Directors for 2003

The Nominating Committee has tabulated the ballots for the election of Directors for 2003. Results were reported to the Directors and to the membership at the December meeting in North Berwick.

The following were elected for three-year terms:

William Alexander, Jr.	Brunswick and Topsham Water District
Mary Jane Dillingham	Auburn Water District
Skip Dumais	Van Buren Water District

Directors Elect Officers

At the January 2 Board of Directors meeting the following individuals were elected as officers of the association:

President:	Jeffrey L. LaCasse
First Vice President:	Judy Kelley
Second Vice President:	Michael Nadeau
Secretary:	Mary Jane Dillingham
Treasurer:	William Alexander, Jr.

Each officer will serve a one-year term.

Operator Exams Scheduled for April, October

Members Reminded of Free Information, Services

There is much in the way of free information and no-cost services available through state and federal agencies and private entities. Members can take advantage of these programs for help with income surveys, financial issues and safety training. The following resources are available:

Income Surveys

RCAP
Arthur Astaritia
766-3065
astarita@earthlink.net

SRF Funding

ME. Municipal Bond Bank
Karen Asselin
P. O. Box 2268
Augusta, ME 04338
800-821-1113

Loans and Grants

Dept of Economic and Community Development Michael Baran 624-9816 www.meocd.org mike.baran@state.me.us	USDA Rural Development Al Daigle, Director, Rural Utilities Services 990-3676
--	--

Safety Training

Maine Dept. Of Labor Safety Works! Program 45 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333-0045 624-6400 1-877-SAFE-345	Central Maine Power Richard Grimshaw 623-3521 ext 4562
--	--

Great Salt Bay Announces Position Opening

The Great Salt Bay Sanitary District has an opening for Water Division Manager. Responsibilities include all aspects pertaining to the operation and maintenance of the water treatment and distribution system, including hydrants, mains, valves, services, pumps, collections, meter reading, water testing and reporting to state agencies. Pagers are provided for response to after-hours emergencies.

Candidates must have excellent public relations skills, high mechanical aptitude and be able to read, understand and follow Public Utilities Commission rules as well as Safe Drinking Water Act rules. The candidate must also have (or obtain within 2 years) a Maine Water System Operator's Class II (or higher) license.

A valid Maine driver's license is required and a background check will be performed.

GCBSD offers excellent health insurance and retirement plans, paid holidays and vacation. For additional information, contact GSBSD at P. O. Box 23, Damariscotta, ME 04543; phone: (207) 563-5105.

Training Sessions Scheduled for First Half of 2003

The Education and Operations Committee has developed and scheduled training sessions for 2003. The following classes have been set for the first half of the year:

Jan 28, 29, 30, 2003	Pumps and Pumping
March 4, 5, 2003	Construction Inspection
March 19, 2003	Intermediate Excel
April 22-25, 2003	Excavation Safety/Hands-on Backhoe Training
June 24, 26, 2003	Office Staff Session

Notices for the January session were previously mailed. Notices for the others will be forthcoming. For additional information, contact the MWUA office.

2003 Wellhead Protection Grant Applications Due April 1

The Maine Drinking Water Program is accepting applications for wellhead protection grants. Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2003.

All community and non-profit non-community public water systems, which utilize a groundwater source, are eligible for grant awards of up to \$5,000 to plan or implement projects designed to protect their groundwater supply from contamination.

Projects such as the development or implementation of a wellhead protection plan, developing public educational materials, or developing useful base maps are eligible for funding. Projects will be evaluated and ranked based on several specific criteria. A total of \$100,000 has been allocated for the grant program for year 2003. In general, projects with a demonstrated need, which build on previous source protection work and which involve other municipal or volunteer partners, are more likely to be approved.

Questions can be directed to Joy Adamson of the Drinking Water Program at (207) 287-5681 or joy.adamson@maine.gov.

Phase II Regulations to Aid, Impact Water Utilities

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is proposing to issue General Permits to cover regulated activities under the Maine Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MEPDES) Stormwater Program. The regulated activities covered under the General Permits include

(cont. from p. 5)

construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land; and municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) in the following municipalities: Kittery, Eliot, Berwick, South Berwick, Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Scarborough, Cape Elizabeth, South Portland, Portland, Westbrook, Gorham, Windham, Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, Freeport, Lewiston, Auburn, Sabattus, Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Veazie, Orono, Old Town, and Milford.

Under the Construction General Permit, applicable activity must meet performance standards. A Notice of Intent to Comply (NOI), along with specific information, must be submitted prior to construction. The NOI is similar to the Permit-by-Rule process. The NOI will, in most cases, be deemed approved 14 calendar days after receipt by DEP.

A provision in the MS4 General Permit that will affect water utilities pertains to discharges from potable water sources. The original proposal would have allowed non-chlorinated discharges from potable water sources provided they did not contribute to a violation of water quality standards. This had implications for chlorinated systems relative to flushing, main disinfection and other distribution system activities. After meeting with the association's Executive Director, DEP staff modified the proposal to allow discharges from potable water sources provided that the discharge is done during a wet weather event, high stream flows, or to a vegetated buffer.

The MEPDES Stormwater Program will serve to protect sources of supply from construction and other activities that could adversely impact water quality. The pollution prevention performance standards will also require more of water utilities relative to water main and other construction projects.

Copies of the General Permits and fact sheets are available at the DEP's web site at: www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/comment.htm.

Comments on the draft General Permits must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 7, 2003. The Department will hold public meetings to provide information about the Construction and MS4 General Permits and their requirements, on January 21 in Portland and on January 24 in Bangor.

February Meeting to Offer Variety of Activities

The association's Program Committee has been diligently at work, lining up speakers and finalizing details for the 2003 February Meeting and Trade Show. The sessions Monday will help attendees deal with new challenges, whether they be of the public relations type or

of an operational nature, such as what to do with the water flushed from a disinfected water main.

We are very fortunate to have top-notch Business Luncheon and Banquet speakers. Natalie Manor will help us understand why some days are more memorable than others. Charlie Eshbach, Maine Sea Dogs President and General Manager, will tell us what was involved in bringing Red Sox affiliation to Portland.

The committee has truly concentrated on making the Trade Show an even better event than it has been in the past. There are two construction safety sessions scheduled for Tuesday at the Civic Center, more food has been ordered for the complimentary luncheon and public work directors and Maine Wastewater Control Association members have been invited. At 3 PM there will be a raffle for a trimmer / brush cutter, \$200 gift certificates at Home Depot and LL Bean and a weekend at either the Samoset Resort or Sugarloaf. You must be present to win these raffle prizes.

The Social Hour and Banquet will be festive events as David Parent hands the reigns to Jeff LaCasse, well deserving individuals receive recognition awards and Charlie Eshbach provides a vision to get us through the rest of winter. Once again, on Sunday evening, the association will host an informal Meet and Greet in room 1124 of the Holiday Inn. Join us if you can.

**DHS, DEP Issue Proposed Rule Change
and Recent Adoption of Guidance
update!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Recent regulatory action by the Departments of Human Services and Environmental Protection that pertain to licensed operator requirements and the management of backwash filtrate from drinking water treatment plants may impact water system operations.

The DHS rule changes proposed by the Board of Licensure of Water Treatment Plant Operators provide for Operator-in-Training licenses for the Very Small Water System and Class I classifications. The revisions also call for modifying the Treatment System Classification Point Values so that corrosion control is assigned 5 points, compared to the current value of 10 points.

Recent guidance adopted by the Maine DEP specifies how backwash filtrate from drinking water treatment plants is to be handled. The purpose of the guidance is to explain the disposal and utilization options for the filtrate, in accordance with solid waste rules.