The Private Well Conference: A National Workshop on Private Well Issues

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at the University of Illinois

The Private Well Class is Sponsored, Funded, & Supported By
The Rural Community Assistance Partnership & USEPA

RCAP’s Private Well Program

• A national outreach and well owner education program.
• Being implemented through the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) and its 6 regional affiliates to support private well owners.
• RCAP Partners include www.PrivateWellClass.org at the University of Illinois, NEHA, NGWA, and the WSC and 5 state well education programs (coop extension).

RCAP’s Private Well Program

• Includes both Online and Boots on the Ground Efforts.
  • U of IL Private Well Class – online lessons, webinars, videos, podcasts, newsletter, phone and email support.
  • RCAP – face to face workshops for well owners, sanitarians, and other stakeholders; one-on-one well vulnerability assessments (over 1,000 so far).
  • NEHA – online class for sanitarians, support for PWC.
  • NGWA – WellOwner.org, newsletter, webinars, videos, financial information, and more.
  • Webinars to support the lessons and take questions.
  • WSC – hotline, factsheets, well owner manual
  • Extension – workshops, sampling in 5 states

CDC Survey

• Evaluate well owner education and outreach programs from around the country. (Why don’t well owners test?)
• Surveyed 93 programs to gather information on implementation, methods, results and logistics.
• Qualitative look at challenges, experiences, lessons learned and suggested best practices.

Challenges

• Lack of funding for private well programs.
• Differences in Construction Codes/ Rules:
  – What is a private well.
  – Permitting and well log submittal.
  – New Jersey vs Pennsylvania.
  – Especially in enforcing what rules they have.
• Not a lot of training available for County/Local Health Departments on private well issues.
• Has led to mostly local approaches to support well owners in many parts of the country.
A Lot Is Going On

• We learned about programs that are active at the state and local level, some unique with great ideas.
• Also learned about the challenges everyone is facing, and realized sharing solutions and ideas would be a powerful way to support each other.
• Cliff Treyens said once to me (and it stuck), “There are so many private wells, and well owners are so hard to reach, that there is plenty of room for all of our efforts. (which is why we all submitted one proposal to EPA together, rather than competing for funding.)
• We realized we needed a workshop to bring everyone together to share challenges, ideas, successes, and develop partnerships.

Why EPA Workshop Has Been So Successful

• They pick the topics and invite the speakers they want
• They pay for each state to send 1-2 people who are working with small systems.
• Mostly a single track, with some breakout sessions, panels, and time to learn from experts.
• Have expanded breaks and activities to encourage interaction.
• Market and target professionals who are all involved with small systems.
• Let anyone come for free and provide conference materials.

We Also Had A Great Model

14th Annual EPA Drinking Water Workshop
Small Systems Challenges and Solutions
August 22-24, 2017 - Hilton Netherland Plaza - Cincinnati, Ohio

Agenda

Tuesday, August 22, 2017
1:45 pm - 2:00 pm
Registration

2:00 pm - 2:15 pm
Welcome Address and Keynotes
Host: Thomas Pennell, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD)

2:15 pm - 2:50 pm
Agency Priorities and Introduction of Keynote Speaker

2:50 pm - 3:00 pm
Keynote Address

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm
Drillers’ Panel

3:15 pm - 3:25 pm
Lightning Talks

3:25 pm - 4:00 pm
Panel Discussion - Interests in Binder

4:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Free Panel Discussion - Interests in Binder

4:30 pm - 4:45 pm
Drillers’ Panel

4:45 pm - 5:00 pm
Lightning Talks

5:00 pm - 5:15 pm
Panel Discussion - Interests in Binder

5:15 pm - 5:30 pm
Free Panel Discussion - Interests in Binder

5:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Closing Remarks

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We test for a minimum of 340 lab and radio programs. The County health Department requires us to uphold the highest standards. We test homeowners with inspectors and well drillers. We work with waterboards and other customers to meet their requirements for well testing.

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CAPT David Harvey is Deputy Director of the Division of Sanitation Facility Construction (DSFC) within the Indian Health Service. The DSFC plans, designs and constructs private well installations along with other sanitation facilities that serve nearly 400,000 American Indians and Alaska Native people on 566 reservations across the nation. He leads technical assistance to help tribal homeowners and public operators maintain the sanitation facilities provided.

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We are a full service water well contractor in CA serving municipal, residential and industrial water wells. I am also the president elect of the National Groundwater Association.
What We Wanted To Happen

• Expand the national dialogue we were creating with the RCAP private well program.
• Provide an opportunity for practitioners, those working with well owners directly, to share their experience, and develop relationships with like-minded professionals.
• Decided that if we brought 20-30 experienced professionals in to speak, even if no one came, we would have a great workshop, so we paid their travel expenses.
• Wanted it to be free to attend to attract those w/o a travel budget. (had a number from IL and IN who drove in.)
• Start new collaborations, opportunities to learn from each other, leave wanting more and excited to get to it.

Role As Facilitator

• We know there is a lot of great work going on around the country. We wanted to bring those folks with a passion of supporting private well owners together.
• Help develop non-traditional partnerships (we are convinced drilling/GW professionals and sanitarians need each other to create highly successful efforts.)
• Introduce private well practitioners to RCAP and their efforts around the country.
• Elevate common goals we have related to educating private well owners. (raise the bar on expectations nationally)

Challenge – Lead, Arsenic

• Many older homes with lead premise plumbing
  – Complicated, education is difficult
  – Treatment can affect corrosivity
  – Galvanized drop pipe and premise plumbing
  – Corrosivity of natural groundwater
• Arsenic is well known and understood problem, yet
  – Many well owners don’t seem that concerned
  – Sometimes have no choice.

Audience and Focus

• Sanitarians, groundwater professionals, extension, drillers, regulators, labs, educators (all were there)
• Set up conference to step through what we have learned from the Private Well Class Program.
  – Challenges and Opportunities – about wells and well owners, the same/similar issues in many areas.
  – Perspectives – meaning view of well owner, vs regulator, vs educator, vs driller, why each is important for the other to understand.
  – Innovations – what are some of the cool ideas and things some have learned and others need to know
  – Partnerships – a full day on how we can go farther together and the role each of us can play.
Perspectives – Drillers Panel

• Mark Layten – Kickapoo Drilling - Coliform Testing
  - Why there are so many bad tests today
  - The fact that drillers are doing so much more than drilling (sampling, treatment, etc.)
  - Explained procedure

Perspectives – Drillers Panel

• David Henrich – Bergerson-Caswell & NGWA
  - Discussed his public service, NGWA, relationship with state.
  - Drillers are affected by so many rules.
  - Future GW issues.
  - How to elevate the industry, knowledge, and well owner engagement by working together.

Perspectives – Drillers Panel

• Corwin Gingerich – Gingerich Well Drilling
  - Talked about relationships, and why good drillers are good colleagues with public health and regulators.
  - Family business, believes in community.
  - Volunteers, and willing to share resources.

Drillers Panel

- Point was to provide the industry an opportunity to engage participants who are regulators and public health practitioners.
- Not only to share their perspective, but to help them understand how valuable drillers can be in their program.
- And a chance for the audience to ask questions.
  - Discussed what is guaranteed (products & workmanship), learned that quality of the driller certainly matters
  - Shock chlorination
    • Level of chlorine
    • What procedure to use
  - Regulations that don’t make sense or too difficult
    • Sometimes hurt the “good guys”, others ignore
    • Those that don’t follow the rules give all a bad name
  - Educating well owners, drillers role

Innovation – Be Well Informed Tool

• Pierce Rigrod – NH DES
  - Provides well owner with evaluation of water sample.
  - Recommends treatment based on results.
  - Provides guidance
  - Offered code, since conference 6 states have asked for it and are developing similar sites.
Innovation Partnerships – Lane Co.

Sarah Puls – Lane County Oregon

- Wrote grant to get testing equipment.
- Provided to 2 high schools in county.
- Do testing, send out kits, send out letters.
- Learning experience for science students.

Successes

- Evaluations were phenomenal
  - Best conference I have EVER been to.
  - Every presentation was relevant to what I do.
  - I learned so much, and made excellent contacts.
  - Can’t wait for the next one.

- Lots of relationships and partnerships started.
  - VT met FL and TX folks at conference
  - 1100 samples in TX
  - 600 samples in FL
  - We were called to facilitate with state agency

- Most attendees said that they had no idea so much was going on around the country.

Biggest Takeaway - Partnerships

- So many wells, well issues, and uninformed well owners.
- We all have to be engaged in providing solutions to raise public awareness of private well issues. It will:
  - Elevate your business
  - Earn you respect locally
  - Help educate regulators and educators
  - Provide advertising for your business.

- What you can do
  - Contact local extension or health department and offer to present at public meetings for well owners.
  - Be a resource to answer well owner questions.
  - Pass out materials (see me for info)

Questions

Thanks for attending!