



How To Switch Gears:

Moving From Wellhead Protection Plan Development to Protecting Your Drinking Water Supply

Robyn Hoerr, MRWA Source Water Protection Specialist

For those who have had the experience, you understand the large amount of time that is spent on developing a Wellhead Protection (WHP) plan. When the final approval of your plan is received from the regulating state agency, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), it may be very tempting to breathe a huge sigh of relief and envision a nice long vacation from everything 'Wellhead Protection!'

Whoa, there! Resist that temptation! Undoubtedly, the principle of protecting the source of your drinking water is frequently swirling around in your mind during your daily routine—especially if you happen to be a water operations specialist. It may take some thoughtfulness on your part, however, but you can strategically weave the implementation of the WHP plan into the routine operations of the public water supply or city. Accomplishing this will increase the likelihood that the plan goals and objectives will be reached over time, and make protecting your drinking water a lot less time consuming for you!

Once you receive the formal WHP plan approval from MDH, what are some of the things that you can do to get the most out of your plan?

01 TAKE CARE OF THE DETAILS

Congratulations! You just received a WHP Plan Approval Letter from the Minnesota Department of Health! Just as you did at many of the other milestones during the plan development stage, there is a MN WHP Rule procedural requirement to inform the Local Units of Government about the approval of the WHP Plan, and to indicate that the public water supply system intends to begin implementation of the Plan. According to MN Rule, the PWS must:

1. Within 30 days of Plan approval notify the Local Units of Government within the DWSMA of the WHP Plan approval; and,
2. Within 60 days of Plan approval begin implementation of the management strategies identified in the Plan.

WHP plans also can be complex documents with an overwhelming amount of information. At this juncture it is strongly recommended that a short term (two-year) WHP work plan be organized in order to focus your time and energy, plan for SWP grant applications, and identify financial or staff resource needs. Most often the MDH or MRWA Planner that has been working with you during plan development will offer technical assistance with the creation of a WHP work plan.

02 GATHER GOOD PEOPLE AROUND YOU

You should consider pulling together a team of people, or WHP Committee together if you haven't already done so during the WHP Plan development stage. These people can help implement the management strategies identified in the WHP Plan. Having others involved in the implementation of the Plan can:

- Provide the division of duties tailored to each committee member's interests and abilities;
- Spread the work load out among a number of people;

- Generate fresh perspectives and ideas for implementation;
- Provide access to other local agency program resources; and
- Provide opportunities for participation in the WHP process, which can lead to local “buy-in” of your groundwater protection efforts.

03

DEVELOP A FOCUS FOR YOUR EFFORTS

Before rolling up your sleeves and beginning to work extensively to put the management strategies in your WHP Plan in action, it’s a good idea to determine where the WHP Committee will focus its time and resources. Since the Plan will be in effect for a number of years, try placing early focus on a few of the higher priority projects that will result in the most to protection for your drinking water. The WHP Committee can be an invaluable asset during this process.

Some potential priority projects include addressing an existing contamination issue, managing activities and land uses within the Inner Wellhead Management Zone (or, 200-foot radius around each well) and the Emergency Response Area (ERA) identified during the WHPA delineation, or searching for and sealing unused/unsealed wells. By working on high-priority items identified in the WHP plan and paying close attention to what is occurring within areas nearest to the wells, the potential for drinking water contamination may be greatly reduced.

Keep in mind that after WHP plan development your public water supply system will be required to transition to WHP plan implementation. If you happen to be your system’s wellhead protection manager, don’t try to tackle the task by yourself if you don’t have to. Go ahead and recruit a little help! With a little forethought and concerted effort, your system may begin to see positive influences resulting from the work that you and your WHP team do for the protection of your groundwater.

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