

Small Water Systems Technical Committee

9:30-12:30, October 9, 2006

Seattle KC Public Health Eastgate

Facilitator: Tamie Kellogg, Kellogg Consulting

Meeting Summary Notes

1. Introductions – Housekeeping

- The Committee approved the August 7 meeting summary notes.
- Sarah Ogier (KCDNRP) briefly updated the Committee on the work of the Source Exchange technical committee. It is going to conduct a study to evaluate the potential effects of two hypothetical source exchange projects—one in south and the other in north King County.
- Larry Fay described the purpose of a group composed mainly of local health agencies that was recently convened by Ecology. He believes that the group is discussing how to resolve the problem of plats that are approved for development but then are refused permits from Ecology to dig exempt wells.
Agenda Item for October 30 meeting: Larry will report on membership of the Ecology-convened group, frequency of meetings, outcomes of meetings to date, and how the group's work might relate to the King County planning effort and this Committee.
- Tamie reported that with regard to the Small Water System Ecology-funded “placeholder” project and the \$10,000 tentatively allocated to it, the Committee does not have to submit a final proposal by the end of September as previously indicated at a Committee meeting. Although the September 30 deadline is no longer in effect, the money must be obligated by the end of the year.

2. Update: Ecology-Funded Projects

- Ken Johnson (KCDNRP) presented preliminary findings from the Ecology-funded project to determine why, when, and where exempt wells are being drilled in King County over the past five to six years (since January 2000):
 - Water well logs indicate that since 2000, only five percent of wells have been drilled as “water wells” (water supply wells, including domestic, irrigation, industrial, dewatering). Most (75 percent) were drilled for “resource protection” (monitoring wells). The remainder of the logs were prepared for well decommissioning.
 - Of the water purveyors in the county, the Covington water district has the most domestic (168) and irrigation (37) wells in its service area. Cedar River Water and Sewer District has the second largest number of domestic wells (92); Seattle Public Utilities has the second largest number of irrigation wells (19).
 - About 1,540 water wells were drilled since 2000. The number of domestic wells drilled during this time has decreased from a peak of about 400 in 2000 to around 100 in 2006. According to Ken, the number of irrigation wells drilled has increased (no numbers were given).

- The Committee asked Ken to better define some of the terms and to make transparent his assumptions and methods. Members also discussed the following topics:
 - *Dewatering wells.* Most are drilled for use during building construction and then abandoned after construction is completed. However, one member said that because of building height limitations in some areas, developers are constructing multi-level underground parking that may require permanent dewatering wells.
 - *Irrigation wells.* PHSKC does not regulate where irrigation wells are drilled or how they are used. One member said that because there is no follow through, we don't know how much water is used from wells drilled for irrigation purposes and how the water is actually used. Another member mentioned that although irrigation wells alone may not pose a problem, the cumulative effect of wells drilled for various purposes could have an effect on water resources.
 - *Wells used for agricultural businesses.* Wells drilled for agricultural businesses could be classified as industrial use, in which case the 0.5-acre limitation for exempt status would not apply (the 5,000 gpd would still apply). If a well is used for stock watering, then the 5,000 gpd would not apply.
- Bill Lasby (PHSKC) reported on progress of Ecology-funded projects to update maps of Group B system locations, compile data on new Group B systems, and collect data on water use. PHSKC asked six systems (with up to nine connections) that have master meters to submit weekly water usage data from August through October 31, 2006. There are about 1,500 Group B systems in King County, 400 of which have meters. PHSKC and DOH check the meters when doing sanitary surveys but do not read them. Members suggested the following:
 - Ask more systems to submit weekly data.
 - Don't try to generalize from such a small sample.
 - Connect water usage data with information on the properties (lot size, livestock, distance from urban core, and so forth).

Action Item: PHSKC will try to increase the number and diversity of the systems that are submitting water usage data and will check the database for information on the properties.

Action Item: KCDNRP and PHSKC will produce reports on their projects for inclusion in the planned year-end report from the Committee.

3. Updates

- Tamie summarized her “mid-process check” phone conversations held between August 29 and September 30 with 13 members of the Committee. Names of members contacted and a list of the four options for moving forward that emerged from the conversions were sent to members before the meeting. Overall, there seems to be a lack of trust among the members. Other general findings are as follows:

- Reasons for participating on the Committee are varied, from monitoring King County’s actions to representing agencies to wanting to work on small water system problems.
- Some members felt that problems were not clearly defined; others felt that they don’t need to be defined. Some felt that there are multiple problems but that the problems apply to individual entities, not to the whole group.
- Tamie asked members if the mid-process check reflected the concerns and recommendations stated in the phone interviews and if there were additional comments that should be added to the list. The Committee discussed and added recommendations to the Options for Moving Forward:
 - One member suggested that the Committee follow its charter/workplan, rather than bypassing it through one of the options. Some thought that the charter was too process heavy, especially in regard to creating and applying criteria for evaluating issues, and that there is not enough trust and “energy” behind doing such work. Others suggested that choosing Option 1—working on one or more of the issues identified in the mid-process check—would still be following the charter, albeit in a truncated fashion.
 - A member recommended that the Committee determine, based on data/information received to date, which of the initial set of issues are real issues and which are not, and put to bed some of the latter set of issues so that people don’t have to revisit the non-issues. Similar processes have addressed “small system issues” in the past, and it would be more efficient to address all the issues now and put some behind us.
 - A member suggested that the sorting under the charter/workplan would not determine whether an issue is a problem, but only whether the issue was considered a priority for the Committee to discuss.
 - A member recommended that the Committee focus its discussions on how to improve the infrastructure of existing small water systems, rather than on how to limit the formation of new systems.
 - Another suggestion was that if an issue is a problem for some but not for others, such discrepancies, if identified, could be documented in the Committee’s report.
 - Several members expressed a desire to hear a presentation and to discuss the materials sent out in early August that were prepared by the subcommittee formed to refine the issues/questions list.

Action Items for October 30 meeting:

- ***Tamie will add two options to the list: Option 5—“stay the course” (follow existing charter/workplan, perhaps with some modifications to streamline the process); Option 6—use subcommittees to complete the work once one of the other five options is selected.***
- ***Subcommittee members will meet (either in person or by phone) to discuss their presentation.***
- ***The Committee will be re-sent the following materials: (1) subcommittee’s simplified list of issues/questions and accompanying matrix, (2) the detailed***

list of issues/questions with Committee refinements and the subcommittee's overlay, and (3) the original list of issues/questions.

- *Don Wright will prepare an outline of what materials should be sent to Committee members and how to organize the discussion.*

Agenda Item for the October 30 meeting: Subcommittee members will make a presentation on their work products.

4. October 24 Report to the Coordinating Committee

- The Committee agreed that Larry Fay will give a status report on the Small Water Systems Committee at the October 24 meeting of the Coordinating Committee. He will include information on the Ecology-funded projects and other products completed to date, such as the *Summary of Presentations and Handouts*.
- Cathie distributed hard copies of the *Summary of Presentations and Handouts*.

Agenda Item for October 30 meeting: Larry Fay will report on his presentation to the Coordinating Committee, including committee responses to the presentation.

Action Item: Members of the Committee will review the Summary of Presentations and Handouts and provide edits to Cathie by Friday, October 13; Cathie will make changes and post the current version to the Committee Web site.

5. Next Meetings

- Potential agenda items for future meetings (carry forward list):
 - Full Committee: discuss issues regarding Recommendation 6d, funding for infrastructure needs, from the 1991 DOH small water systems report. (Utilities would like a centrally managed program that provides information on funding sources and criteria.)
 - Full Committee: discuss responsibilities/liabilities between satellite managers and certified operators, including the types of services that a satellite management agency can delegate to operators.
 - Ecology: present standards, processes, and policies regarding Q/I 2m— disposition of Group B water rights when Group B systems are absorbed by Group A systems.
 - PHSKC: compile and report on utility referrals in the county for the past three years.
 - PHSKC: the number and locations of daycares in King County.
 - PHSKC: information on well decommissioning in King County.
 - Kaleen Cottingham: a chart depicting coordination among the technical committees.
 - Broader issues discussion with King County DDES including requirements under Title 13 of the KC code and under the GMA.
 - DOH: information on the grant program used to help fund hookup of a small system to the Cedar River water system.

- Discuss funding sources and amounts available to agencies for regulating small water systems to determine whether the funding is adequate.
- Sarah Ogier (KC groundwater protection program): present information on policy recommendations and the work being performed under interlocal agreements.
- Others?
- Meetings currently scheduled:
 - Mon. Oct. 30
 - Mon. Nov. 20
 - Mon. Dec. 11

Abbreviations: DOH—Washington State Department of Health, DNRP—King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Ecology—Washington State Department of Ecology, PHSKC—Public Health—Seattle and King County, CWSP—Coordinated Water System Plan, MWL—Municipal Water Law, SPU—Seattle Public Utilities, WLRD—Water and Land Resources Division within King County DNRP.