

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WELLS AND BORINGS

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, September 1, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Daniel England
Annie Felix-Gerth
Kelly Gribauval-Hite
Bruce Johnson
David Kill
Richard Lamb
Michael Liljegren
Jordan Mayer
Roger Renner
Steve Robertson
Joseph Stevens
Mark Thein
Steven Traut

Others Present

Kara Dennis
Corrie Floyd
Justine Greene
Robyn Hetland
Sue Lang
Brooke Lund
Dave Schulenberg
Jennifer Weier

Members Absent

David Duffey
Daniel Gibbs
Troy Kuck
Michael Steffl

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by the Chairman of the Council, Roger Renner.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF September 1, 2021, MEETING AGENDA

The meeting agenda was approved.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF December 16, 2020, MEETING MINUTES

Joseph Stevens made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Michael Liljegren seconded that motion. The meeting minutes were approved with no suggested additions.

4. INTRODUCTION TO NEW WELL MANAGEMENT SECTION STAFF – Kara Dennis

New Operations Unit Supervisor – Corrie Floyd

Corrie Floyd joined the Well Management Section from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) where he led a team of geologists in the Aggregate Resource Mapping Program since 2015. Corrie has been instrumental in managing the DNR's School Trust Aggregate Leasing Program, where he developed strategies and online tools to optimize environmentally responsible resource management and compliance. Prior to working at the DNR, Corrie worked at Barr Engineering Company as an Environmental Consultant and worked as a Geomorphology Technician at Mount Rainer National Park in Longmire, Washington. In addition to technical expertise, Corrie brings leadership experience and training such as Emerging Leaders Institute, Strategic Effectiveness for Aspiring Leaders (SEAL) and project management.

New Variance Coordinator – Brooke Lund

Brooke Lund is joining the Well Management Section as the new Variance Coordinator. She will be working out of the Duluth District Office. Brooke is a geologist with over 10 years of experience in large hydrogeologic investigations, particularly with the mining industry, and water-supply well, monitoring well, and geotechnical boring design and construction. She recently worked with Operations and Northern Region Well Management Section staff on several variances for hydrogeologic investigations as a consultant for Twin Metals.

New Admin Staff Supervisor – Robyn Hetland

Robyn Hetland is joining the Well Management Section as the Supervisor of the Records and Information Unit. Robyn previously worked at the Minnesota Department of Corrections as a training supervisor. She brings with her great leadership skills, big picture thinking, process improvement, and change management skills along with strong facilitation skills.

5. WELL MANAGEMENT SECTION UPDATES – Kara Dennis

Update on Well Management Staffing and COVID-19 Response

Most Well Management Section staff were reassigned to COVID-19 response work during the past 17 months. Most Well Management Section staff are back to doing their normal work except for Chris Elvrum and Frieda vonQualen. Thanks to Justine Greene for continuing to cover the work of Well Management Program Manager and Jennifer Weier for covering the Operations Unit Supervisor work until Corrie Floyd was hired. There are still a few open positions in Well Management Section that cannot currently be filled. MDH Leadership has limitations on holding in-person meetings. When it is deemed safe by agency leadership, we will hold hybrid meetings.

Continuing Education Topics for 2022 License Renewal

The proposed topics for Continuing Education Topics for 2022 License Renewal are Well Management Update for 2022 License Renewal, Administrative Updates and Well Records Tutorial, New Bored Geothermal Heat Exchanger Rules, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and Groundwater, and Available Resources for Licensed Well Contractors and Groundwater Professionals. These presentations will be provided in the MDH Learning Center.

Clean Water Fund Update

There were two Safe Drinking Water for Private Well Users Grants issued from the Clean Water Fund during the previous biennium. Horizon Public Health was issued \$100,000 to promote private well testing for arsenic in Grant, Stevens, and Traverse Counties. Horizon Public Health will be sending out water testing bottles, contract with certified water testing lab for analysis, and provide financial assistance for water treatment system to treat elevated arsenic concentrations. Eligibility for financial assistance is determined based on income and families with infants or children. The grant period goes from January 12, 2021 – December 31, 2022.

Olmsted Soil and Water Conservation District was issued \$100,000 for monitoring and testing private wells for nitrate in 6-County Partnership in Southeast Minnesota. This grant will also help Olmsted Soil and Water Conservation District provide technical assistance and financial support for water treatment systems to treat elevated nitrate concentrations. The grant period goes from March 2, 2021 – December 31, 2022.

Annie Felix-Gerth provided some clarification on the difference between available Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) funding and these two pilot grants. Usually, Clean Water Funds provided in BWSR funding cannot be used for monitoring, so this is a unique opportunity for monitoring nitrate in Olmsted County. Funding for these grants was not renewed for the next biennium during the 2021 legislative session, but that does not rule out possible pursuing this funding in the future.

Dual-purpose Borings Overview

In March 2021 the Well Management Section received an inquiry from Teck American, Inc. (Teck) about the administrative requirements for using an exploratory boring as an environmental well. This opened a lot of questions regarding dual-purpose wells or borings since Minnesota Rules and Statutes regulate wells and borings by use. We sent an initial memo to Teck on June 8, 2021, and additional guidance will be provided in the coming months. MDH will reach out to DNR and Daniel England as we put together further guidance.

Rulemaking Update and Timeline

The new bored geothermal heat exchanger rules went into effect on March 22, 2021.

There is a draft of the new Environmental Well rules that has been shared internally, but we have not had time or the staffing capacity to move that to the next step during this pandemic. We also decided internally to pause the environmental rule writing process until we have the staff capacity.

6. NOTIFICATION VERIFICATION PROCESS – Corrie Floyd and Robyn Hetland

In early August the Well Management Section made an internal process change. We will no longer be mailing water-supply well and dewatering well construction or sealing notification verifications to licensed well contractors and property owners. A notification is considered filed when it is entered into our database and the fee is processed. While we do our best to process payment quickly, there is not an established timeframe. Robyn provided some recommendations for verifying payment was processed successfully.

7. SCHEDULE 40 PVC WELL CASING – Jennifer Weier

Due to a supply shortage, MDH determined that Schedule 40 PVC well casing is in compliance with Minnesota Rules, part 4725.2550, subpart 1 provided it:

1. Meets ASTM Standard F480-02.
2. Withstands internal pressure of 200 pounds per square inch (psi).

In order to meet the two requirements above, the Schedule 40 PVC well casing must be stamped as meeting ASTM Standard F480 in nominal pipe diameters of 4 inches or less and composed of PVC with cell classification of 12454 (Material Codes 1120 and 1220).

8. MDH REVIEW OF CUSTOM-DESIGNED AND CUSTOM-FABRICATED PITLESS UNITS – Jennifer Weier

MDH received a request to use custom-designed and custom-fabricated pitless units on water-supply wells. Pitless units to be used with an experimental geothermal technology developed by Darcy Solutions. Bergerson-Caswell is the licensed well contractor. Review is still ongoing, with Advisory Council involved.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting was concluded at 11:02 a.m. by the Chairman of the Council, Roger Renner.