

Water Words

April 2008

A Letter from the President

As your new Board President, I trust that each of you is looking forward to a warm spring season.

As we begin the new year, I can only wish all of you the success we all strive for in the upcoming year. I'm excited and most appreciative to you for affording me the opportunity to work for you as your new president. I know and accept the responsibility for serving the North Carolina Ground Water Association membership. However, rest assured that new leadership and guidance will not come without change. To change is to improve, and to improve is to change. Winston Churchill once said "to retreat is to lose ground."

Your new Board is not excited about losing ground! We want to promote and advance our membership, goals, and ideas for NCGWA. We are eager to and have asked to be a part of a team that wants to advance and elevate the playing surface. By doing so, we will work harder and advance quicker and faster on behalf of our industry. We are much too great of an industry to limit our resources, goals, and ideas. New ideas, excitement, energy and enthusiasm! Some of our new ideas are the new layout and format of the newsletter, new educational information, stories, speakers, and better continuing education classes.

With all the flurry of new ideas and activity coming out of Raleigh with regulation changes and more government involvement, I am asking for your support. I want your energy, a good attitude, your compassion and loyalty to the Ground Water Membership and our Water Well Industry. Your new Board wants that cutting edge knowledge, new ideas, and more information for our well industry. If we work together, we serve together and we win together. Then by the end of the year, we will all be winners and we can all share that common goal.

Thanks again for your loyalty and support.

Jerry Merrill

New Legislative Session Begins

On May 13th the new legislative session of the General Assembly will begin in Raleigh. This session will represent the most critical single session for the well drilling industry in this state. With all the focus on the drought last year and continuing this year, lawmakers will be poised to take some sort of action to insure the state's water supplies. NCGWA supports the proper use of legislation to protect North Carolinians and the state's water supplies, but believe that rational and scientific data should be the basis for those decisions, and not public opinion. This is the message we want to convey to our representatives in the General Assembly.

Several items will be discussed in the short session by our legislators as possible solutions to the drought issue. The most devastating to our industry would be placing the authority to regulate well usage on the local or county level. This is exactly what the counties would like to have and will request from the legislature. Local legislators will respond to local voters' complaints about irrigation wells, car washing, etc., and radically limit the number of wells that can be used, thus creating a "dis-incentive" on the part of customers to buy new wells.

Why buy a new well for your irrigation if the county won't let you use it? Wells are private property the county, and the state for that matter, need to keep their hands out of private property. Local authorities have contributed to the water shortage through short-sited planning and inefficient water systems with leaking infrastructure. Individuals who have purchased wells to reduce their reliance on the local supplies are the ones who were proactive and planning ahead. It just

Continued on page 2

New Legislative Session Begins (continued from page 1)

doesn't make sense to take away their rights and hand them over to the local authorities, so they can have full control of all the area water resources. Legislators need to know this. Contact them by mail, fax, telephone or email. Have your customers do the same thing.

Right now, the NCGWA is not asking for your money. We need your physical presence and your letter writing. Our lobbyist is actively working to keep us involved in the legislative process, but her presence will not do the job. Whenever she is asked what we need to do, the answer is always the same: "You need to have your members contact their state representatives about these issues, and you need to have them come to Raleigh when we call for them and be present at these meetings when we need a show of support." The legislators respond to numbers. If 10, or 20, or 50, or 100 well contractors show up at a meeting representing their industry, that gets the attention of the General Assembly. If only a paid lobbyist and one or two guys show up, that's not too impressive, and it sends a message that our industry does not really care about groundwater or wells. The NCGWA will set up a method to contact you. **But we need you to come when we call!** You won't have much time to think about it, either (usually get the call the day before we need you there). This is a battle for our livelihood. You can either be involved now, or find someone to buy your equipment later. If the counties get control over when folks can, or if folks can, use their private wells, there won't be many private wells that will be installed anymore. Would you buy a well if you could only use it when and if the county allowed you? Without wells to drill, we are all just scrap metal dealers.

Submitted by Mike Floyd, McCall Brothers

Association Issues and Concerns –

Do you have issues and concerns that you would like the association to assist you with? If so, please send a letter describing your concerns, and we will reply with a letter and/or send yours to the Commission. Send this information to: NCGWA, Post Office Box 41368, Raleigh, NC 27629. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call us at 919-876-0687 or 800-889-7118 (NC only).

Your New Board of Directors

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Probe Finds Drugs in Drinking Water

A vast array of pharmaceuticals -- including antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones -- has been found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans, an Associated Press investigation shows.

To be sure, the concentrations of these pharmaceuticals are tiny, measured in quantities of parts per billion or trillion, far below the levels of a medical dose. And, utilities insist their water is safe.

But the presence of so many prescription drugs -- and over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen -- in so much of our drinking water is heightening worries among scientists of long-term consequences to human health.

In the course of a five-month inquiry, the AP discovered that drugs have been detected in the drinking water supplies of 24 major metropolitan areas -- from Southern California to northern New Jersey.

The federal government doesn't require any testing and hasn't set safety limits for drugs in water. Of the 62 major water providers contacted, the drinking water for only 28 was tested. Among the 34 that haven't: Charlotte, Chicago, Miami, Baltimore, Boston and New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, which delivers water to 9 million people.

Providers rarely disclose results of such screenings, unless pressed, the AP found. For example, the head of a group representing major California suppliers said the public "doesn't know how to interpret the information" and might be unduly alarmed.

How do the drugs get into the water?

People take pills. Their bodies absorb some of the medication, but the rest of it passes through and is flushed down the toilet. The wastewater is treated before it is discharged into reservoirs, rivers or lakes. Then, some of the water is cleansed again at drinking water treatment plants and piped to consumers. But most treatments do not remove all drug residue.

And while researchers do not yet understand the exact risks from decades of persistent exposure to random combinations of low levels of pharmaceuticals, recent studies -- which have gone virtually unnoticed by the general public -- have found alarming effects on human cells and wildlife.

"We recognize it is a growing concern, and we're taking it very seriously," said Benjamin Grumbles, assistant administrator for water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

AP reporters reviewed hundreds of scientific reports, analyzed federal drinking water databases, visited environmental study sites and treatment plants and interviewed more than 230 officials, academics and scientists.

Here are some of the key test results:

- Officials in Philadelphia said testing there discovered 56 pharmaceuticals or byproducts in treated drinking water, including medicines for pain, infection, high cholesterol, asthma, epilepsy, mental illness and heart problems. Sixty-three pharmaceuticals or byproducts were found in the city's watersheds.
- Anti-epileptic and anti-anxiety medications were detected in a portion of the treated drinking water for 18.5 million people in Southern California.
- Researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey analyzed a Passaic Valley Water Commission drinking water treatment plant, which serves 850,000 people in Northern New Jersey, and found a metabolized angina medicine and the mood-stabilizing carbamazepine in drinking water.

Of the 28 major metropolitan areas where tests were performed on drinking water supplies, only Albuquerque, Austin, Texas, and Virginia Beach, Va., said tests were negative.

Continued on page 4

Probe finds drugs in drinking water (continued from page 3)

Rural consumers who draw water from their own wells aren't in the clear either, experts say.

Even users of bottled water and home filtration systems don't necessarily avoid exposure. Bottlers, some of which simply repackage tap water, do not typically treat or test for pharmaceuticals, according to the industry's main trade group. The same goes for the makers of home filtration systems.

Some drugs, including widely used cholesterol fighters, tranquilizers and anti-epileptic medications, resist modern drinking water and wastewater treatment processes. Plus, the EPA says there are no sewage treatment systems specifically engineered to remove pharmaceuticals.

Much remains unknown. Many independent scientists are skeptical that trace concentrations will ultimately prove to be harmful to humans. There's growing concern in the scientific community, though, that certain drugs -- or combinations of drugs -- may harm humans over decades because water, unlike most specific foods, is consumed in sizable amounts every day.

Our bodies may shrug off a relatively big one-time dose, yet suffer from a smaller amount delivered continuously over a half century, perhaps subtly stirring allergies or nerve damage. Pregnant women, the elderly and the very ill might be more sensitive.

"We know we are being exposed to other people's drugs through our drinking water, and that can't be good," says Dr. David Carpenter, who directs the Institute for Health and the Environment of the State University of New York at Albany.

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News From Your President

After 2,500 miles, seven states, five large cities, 30,000 people, motel rooms, taxi cabs, restaurant food, snow, ice, and rain – I'm glad to be home!!! Yes, we have been on the go – not only for our nursery, but for water well and the green industry.

Marketing! Marketing! Marketing! I've been hard at work traveling the show circuit, firming up buyers, running down quotes, and looking for new ideas to help improve our business and our industry. All the shows that I've been in this year have all set new attendance records: Baltimore, MD – 11,250, Greensboro, NC Green & Growing – 5,000, Columbus, OH CENTS – 14,400. WOW!! What a multitude of buyers, sellers, wholesalers, retailers, pan handlers, tonic salesmen and tire kickers! But, here we are – our industry ready for 2008. Will it be a boom year? Will the stock market uncertainty and anxiety about the economy lead customers to spend less on housing and landscaping? Who's to say? But we do know that the water well and the green industry is off to a slow start. Let's not be discouraged by a traditionally slow month.

The food industry is reporting market increases in food sales. Existing home sales have hit an all time low. And Americans are saving less money and preferring to be with family and friends more. Interest rates have declined – now is that not good news!? So, one might ask themselves – why are we off to such a slow start? The number one answer is not the stock market, interest rates, or Iraq. The final answer across the board is "drought and slow housing starts"! My buyers and you, too, are telling me that they have houses sitting from the fall of 2007. Also, the green industry is suffering! Why? Because it was too dry to dig and plant. Restrictions may be placed on drilling irrigation wells! If you can't plant and there are water restrictions, then you can't sell. After all, nothing happens until someone sells something.

However, some people are buying and selling homes. We understand people are spending more time tending gardens and making their homes a more wonderful place to live. So, stay on board, keep the faith! The rain is coming, spring will arrive, and sales of houses will rebound. Life will be bountiful and plentiful again in our industry.

Now that's the good news!

Jerry Merrill, Merrill Well & Pump

Governor Has Asked Legislature for Authority To Restrict Wells and Well Water Use

In May the NC 2008 Legislature will open and address what the Governor has said is the worst drought in NC history. Governor Easley has announced a legislative plan to modernize water systems, mandate conservation and upgrade emergency response. Some of the proposals include:

1. Giving local water agencies in extreme and exceptional drought the authority to impose mandatory water conservation measures to all water users within their jurisdiction, including customers of privately owned water utilities regulated by the state Utilities Commission. (This would give each county the authority to put restrictions on privately owned wells.)
2. Requiring communities in extreme and exceptional drought to adhere to minimum water conservation standards developed by the DENR.
3. Staffing and funding to create an Office of Water Conservation and Efficiency in DENR to more effectively oversee all our water policy, planning and conservation efforts.
4. New outdoor water uses, such as in-ground irrigation, will be required to have meters separate from meters that monitor indoor water use.
5. Local water systems must conduct regular leak detection and repair audits, move toward conservation based pricing and develop through water shortage plans in order to be eligible for state funds for water system improvement projects.
6. DENR will get staff and funding to develop a detailed and up-to-date map that shows all water system interconnections, alternative water supplies, groundwater status and other information.
7. The Governor is also proposing a revision of the building code to require water efficient fixtures and to change the rules to allow household water "gray water" to be used to hand-water trees, shrubs, and plants in a homeowner 's yard.
8. Adopting water efficiency standards for new in-ground irrigation systems.

These are some of the issues that you will be hearing about this year. Many of the issues are good and make good common sense to try and solve a problem that has been caused by poor planning by some local governments. The rights of an individual well owner may be taken away this year and given to the same local government that caused the problem. Wells and well owners are competition for local government (public water systems) and now the state is trying to give them authority to regulate use of a privately owned utility which would give them a legal monopoly on all water rights in NC. Please talk to your customers, legislators and friends and make them aware of the water rights they will be losing on their own property.

Submitted by David Hutson, Acme Well

Water Systems Council Member Allan Bo Andersson Receives Manufacturer Special Recognition Award From NGWA

Allan Bo Andersson, a long-standing Water Systems Council (WSC) Board member and president/CEO of Danfoss Flomatic Corporation, received the National Ground Water Association's (NGWA) Manufacturer Special Recognition Award. The award was given in recognition of Andersson's accomplishments in the groundwater manufacturing industry.

Andersson was honored for his efforts in education and the development of technical information for the groundwater industry. He is an active member of WSC, NGWA, the American Ground Water Trust, and other organizations. Danfoss Flomatic Corporation is based in Glen Falls, New York.

WSC is a national non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the wider use of wells as modern and affordable safe drinking water systems and to protecting ground water resources nationwide. It is the only national organization solely focused on individual water wells and other private well-based water systems.

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For a list of vendors with phone numbers, please visit our website at www.ncgwa.org

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Thank you to all who donated items and participated in the auction to make it a huge success which in return will help defend and protect our water well industry

A Special Thank you to Drillers Service, Inc.
and Red Jacket Water Products for Sponsoring the Friday
Night Pig Pickin' at the 2008 NCGWA Trade Show

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Congratulations to Our Raffle Winners

Brian Price, Mullis Well Drilling
Corey Spiece, Keith's Well Drilling
Dale Todd, Todd Well Drilling
Danny Teagen, Hickory Well Drilling
Dave Mullis, Mullis Well Drilling
David Walker, Schramer Rotary Drilling
Doug Young, Goulds Pump
Dustin Milsap, Graham Well Drilling
James Council, Acme Well Drilling
Jeff Brackins, Rueben Caldwell Drilling
Kirk Maher, Charter Plastics

Larry Ferguson, Ferguson Well Drilling
Larry Tucker, Tucker Well & Pump
Lynn Crouch, Drillers Service
Michael McMillion, Clearwater Drilling
Mike Floyd, McCall Brothers
Mike Mullis, Mullis Well Drilling
Robert Teague, Price Well Drilling
Roy Price, Price Well Drilling
Scott Hilliard, Reece Pump Service
Ted Brewer, Claude Brewer Well Drilling
Van Davis, Van Davis & Son
Wayne Rose, East Tenn. Water Production

Thank You

The family of Wilson Martin acknowledges with grateful appreciation the kind expression of your sympathy. Thank you so much for the peace lily you sent at Wilson's death. It was very nice and we are still enjoying it's beauty.

I'm sure you all have some good memories of Wilson riding from Statesville, having lunch or discussion problems of well drilling and water.

Thank you for supporting my family and me during this sad loss.

Sincerely, Kay
