Acton Water District

WINTER 2008

Water Words Notice

It is with great pride that I compose this greeting to you. I'm extremely glad to be here as District Manager for one of the finest public water suppliers in the region. In the water supply industry, The Water District of Acton has an impeccable reputation of excellence. My predecessor, Jim Deming, set a specific standard, and it is my task to uphold it, and strive to improve on it.

I would like to briefly introduce my background. I was born and raised in Lynn, MA, and currently reside in Tyngsboro, MA with my wife of 17 years. I spent eight years proudly serving in the submarine force of the US Navy where I was stationed on-board the USS Asheville, a fast attack submarine operating out of Norfolk, VA. I was honorably discharged in 1996, and gained employment with the City of Worcester Water Department as the Senior Instrumentation Technician. There, I was instrumental in the start up of a 50 Million-Gallon-per-Day surface water treatment plant. In 2000, I left the City of Worcester for a management position with the Town of Littleton Electric Light and Water Department. I moved my way through the ranks, and eventually became the head of the water department, and primary operator for a system that includes a State-of-the-art Ozonation and membrane filtration facility for the removal of Iron and Manganese from groundwater.

When the opportunity arose to become the District Manager of Acton, I knew where I wanted to finish my career. Having been in the industry for eleven years, I was fully aware of Acton's superior reputation. I was also aware of the challenge of solving some serious water quality issues. Since a large portion of my experience is in the area of treatment, I thought it a perfect fit.

As you may know, we are in the process of designing a Zenon membrane facility for the removal of Iron, Manganese and organic color in North Acton. Membrane filtration is fast becoming the Best Available Technology (BAT) for removal of these non-harmful, but aesthetically undesirable, minerals. This facility will be the first of several treatment plants that we will eventually end up building. Since our source wells are so geographically distant, the construction of one treatment facility blending all sources is not feasible. This process will take time. I realize that many of you experience water quality issues frequently. I am always available to answer questions and listen to your concerns. However, with that said, I ask for your patience and understanding as we strive to make necessary improvements to our system, and, subsequently, the product that we provide.

The staff here at the Water District is dedicated to providing the finest customer service and safest drinking water possible. That has become very evident to me in the short period that I've been District Manager. I look forward to long and prosperous career with the District, and look forward to positive interactions with many of you along the way. Realistically, I know things will not always be rosy. But, I am committed to accepting the challenge at hand now and into the future.

Thank you,

Chris Allen
District Manager

Chris Allen is the new District Manager of the Acton Water District

Kennedy-Marshall Water Treatment Plant Costs Rise

The projected cost for the construction of the water treatment plant due to be built at the Kennedy-Marshall well site in North Acton has increased dramatically. Since the first estimates were obtained by the Acton Water District last year from Wright-Pierce Environmental Engineers, the proposed cost has risen from $3.3 million to $5.3 million. This significant increase is due to construction and material costs rising considerably in the recent past. The March 21, 2007 annual meeting article approving the funds for the project in the amount of $4.4 million will require an additional appropriation of $880,000 at the next annual meeting on March 19, 2008, in order for the project to proceed. To get a firm idea of actual costs, the project will be put to public bid in January-February 2008. Please refer to *www.actonwater.com* for periodic updates.

Acton Water District Annual Meeting:
March 19, 2008, Acton Memorial Library

Protecting Our Sources—Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products

Many water utilities and the customers they serve are becoming increasingly concerned about the myriad of pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs) that have been found in waste water across the nation. PPCPs are a diverse group of chemicals that include human and veterinary drugs, consumer fragrances, cosmetics, sunscreens, laundry and cleaning products, even dietary supplements. PPCPs may enter the environment when excreted by humans or domestic animals, or when they are disposed of down toilets or drains.

No drinking water standards for PPCPs currently exist, and your septic system, and most municipal wastewater treatment plants, are not designed to handle or treat these chemicals. There is concern about the effects of chronic exposure to low levels of PPCPs in water. The risks posed to aquatic organisms and to humans are unknown, largely because the concentrations are generally very low. While the major concerns have been antibiotic resistance and disruption of endocrine systems by natural and synthetic sex steroids, many other PPCPs have yet unknown consequences; the research into PPCPs in water supplies is in its early stages.

There are things you can do to minimize the presence of PPCPs in water. Never flush unneeded or expired medications down a toilet or drain. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags, before putting them in the trash. Also, use PPCPs sparingly, completely, and according to label recommendations. When purchasing new products avoid those with unnecessary ingredients such as scents, or those labeled antimicrobial. Consider using products that are more likely to biodegrade in the environment, such as those with ingredients such as baking soda, vinegar, or lemon juice. For more information on this topic, visit: *www.epa.gov/ppcp/.*

System-wide Lead and Copper Sampling Completed

Every three years the Acton Water District collects samples from residents across town to determine the levels of lead and copper in water delivered to the tap. Lead and copper can enter drinking water when pipe metals and materials are dissolved by the water flowing through those pipes. This process is called corrosion. The main purpose of the lead and copper program is to ensure that customers are not being exposed to unhealthy levels of lead and copper, and to set "action levels" for water utilities' corrosion control practices. We completed this monitoring in July 2007, and are happy to report that all 30 samples, plus four additional samples we collected at elementary schools, fell below the action levels for copper. Although one home's sample fell above the action level for lead, it was likely due to a recent plumbing installation, as all resamples at that site were below the action level. Thank you to those of you who participated in this monitoring program—your cooperation is much appreciated!

Recycle Non-working or Older Model Digital Electronics

The ongoing recycling effort for cell phones, laserjet, and inkjet printer cartridges continues at the Acton Water District office, with donations going towards the McCarthy-Towne School. Now some additional used items are being accepted for parts recycling. Used DVDs (movies or video games), portable DVD

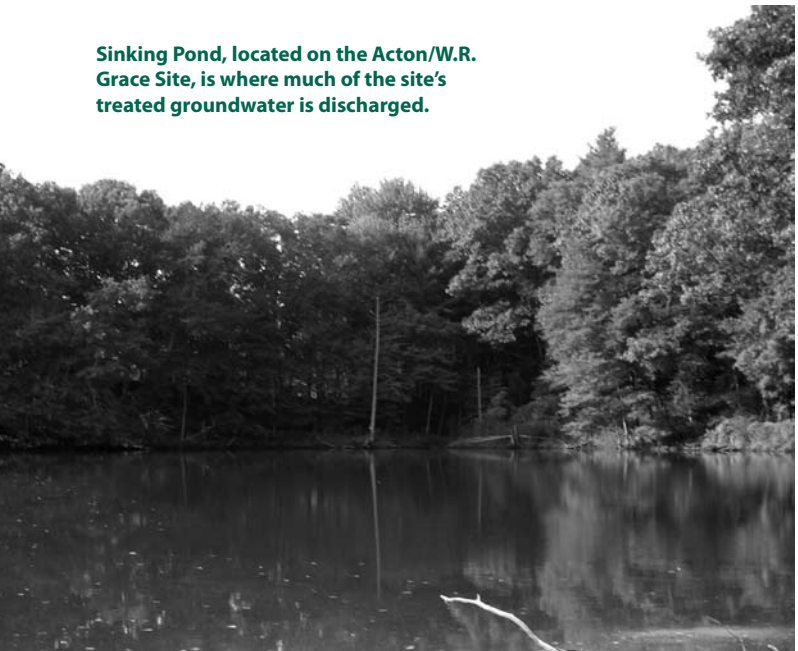
players, laptops and notebook computers, MP3 players, iPods, digital cameras, digital video recorders, digital camcorders, digital picture frames, GPS devices and video game consoles can now be dropped off for recycling. The equipment does not need to be working, but the recycling company will donate more for operational and higher-powered equipment. Copier toner cartridges, cell phone accessories, CDs, and desktop computers are *not* recycled. The collection box is located just inside the front entrance of the Acton Water District Office on Massachusetts Ave, just west of West Acton Center. Other drop boxes are located at the main branch of the Acton Memorial Library and in the lobby of McCarthy-Towne School. For more specifics on these recycling programs, see the ecophones.com and FundingFactory.com websites. Thank you in advance for your donations!

WR Grace Site Update

In 1980 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) entered into a Consent Decree with W.R.Grace requiring cleanup of the Superfund site in South Acton near the Assabet Wells. The EPA mailed a community update last month to many residents living near the site. The community update provides information on site remediation activities planned for 2007 and 2008, including cleanup of sediment and groundwater in the landfill and northeast areas. The northeast area groundwater plume of volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) has been of particular interest to the Acton Water District, as it is near the School Street wells.

The Acton Water District has been involved in reviewing all remediation plans, and will continue to monitor progress at the site. We continue to operate and maintain aeration towers to fully remove any VOCs present in groundwater pumped from the Assabet and School Street wells.

A detailed site history can be found at EPA's W.R. Grace Superfund site website: *www.epa.gov/superfund/grace*. Also, if you would like to see a copy of the community update, you can find it on the "publications" link of our website: *www.actonh2o.com*.



Sinking Pond, located on the Acton/W.R. Grace Site, is where much of the site's treated groundwater is discharged.

Adopt a Hydrant

The Acton Water District and the Acton Fire Department ask that all residents consider "adopting" a fire hydrant this upcoming winter. If there is a fire hydrant close to your home please consider taking a few minutes to clear away any snow from it so that it is easily accessible in case of a fire emergency. This could save precious minutes in critical fire situations; your family's and neighbor's safety could depend on it. When plowing or shoveling, avoid piling snow in front of or on hydrants as this may damage the hydrant. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Stained Laundry?

Most New England groundwater naturally contains iron and manganese, dissolved from the sands and gravels that comprise the aquifer. Acton's groundwater is no exception. Certain wells in Acton contain higher concentrations of iron and manganese, and the concentrations in individual wells will also fluctuate over time. Because of this, some customers may experience intermittent staining of white plumbing fixtures, the inside of dishwashers, and light colored laundry—giving new meaning to the term "red socks".

For customers who experience staining of laundry, dishes, or porcelain, the following actions should help to minimize the problem:

- Do not wash white laundry when the water appears discolored.
- Ensure that your hot water heater is set below 120 degrees F.
- Wash laundry in cool or lukewarm water.
- Turn off any "temperature boost" features on your washing machine.
- Avoid the use of bleach or oxidizing detergents.
- Maintain your hot water tank as directed, most need regular flushing.

If you *do* experience a load of stained white laundry, you may stop by the Acton Water District during regular business hours to pick up some "Red Be Gone" which can remove iron and manganese stains.

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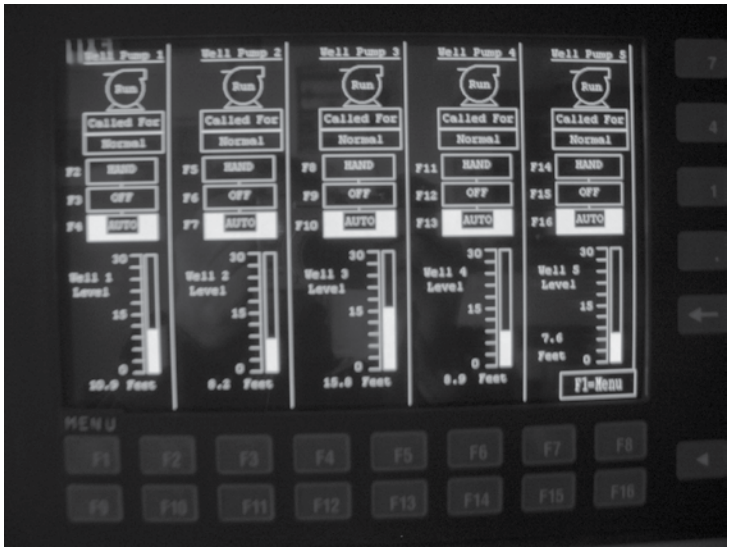
What was it?

Many readers correctly identified the mystery photo—a soil moisture meter—in the last Water Words Notice. Congratulations to: Joy Madden, Corrina Roman-Kreuze, Ginger Doyle, Campbell Lindsay, Gloria Jacobs, Jim McDonough, Susan Rigby and Louis Genovese, and Dale Hesch. Soil moisture meters are a great way to determine the watering needs of your grass. Acton Water District customers can stop by our office during regular hours and pick up moisture meters and other water conserving devices—for free!



What is it?

Please email your answers to *webgeek@actonh2o.com*. Winners (and the correct answer) will be posted in the next *Water Words Notice*.