

# BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

By Tim Tice, Groundwater Specialist

The cool spring breeze flows through the house as the words flow onto the paper. Yes, spring has finally arrived with an increase in daily temperatures of thirty plus degrees in a manner of two weeks. It is welcomed with open arms and open windows. The “get it done” bug has bitten most of us to proceed outside and hear the voices from the garden or back porch. It is assumed that for most water systems the construction projects are in full swing, forcing the crews to get outside.

With projects moving up on the priority list, many indoor assignments are put on hold. Training classes, employee evaluations, compiling of reports for the powers to be seem to pile up on the corner of the desk or shelf. The oddest task for those water systems that have drinking water protection plans is the deep rooted paper work of implementing best management practices for your drinking water protection area.

Best management practices, what the heck are they and how are they applied to water and the water system? Well, generally speaking, a best management practice is an action developed for a specific operation, usually associated with the agricultural and commercial industry. It is in the “action of practices” that methods are considered to better enhance the operations, such as housekeeping, spill prevention or the reduction of hazardous materials; all of which are geared to being environmentally friendly. In terms of water protection, best management practices refer “to represent any waste reduction or prevention activity. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

In the past few articles, an effort to better understand the importance of water protection, and those elements and reasons for Drinking Water Protection plans is being conveyed, as well as those steps necessary for such. In the last article, difficulty in putting into perspective that you (the water system) have no control in keeping the source of your drinking water clean was expressed. One attempt in reducing your water source from contamination is by opening the lines of

communication with those entities inside the drinking water protection area. How does one approach this task?

A various set of management options can be employed and categorized into either an aggressive or non-aggressive approach. Being hopeful in thought, it is anticipated that most of us would prefer the non-aggressive approach and still see results.

Incorporating best management practices into a way of doing business can be summarized by the following:

- ◆ Enhanced effectiveness and organization.
- ◆ Cost savings by using less products; creating less waste.
- ◆ Decreased liability connected with spills or environmental damages.

Drinking water protection, unlike many of the other standard “Safe Drinking Water Act” regulations is a voluntary means to proactively keep your water clean. It allows management at the local level instead of having big government respond in a reactive method, “clean up”.

An example of a non-aggressive approach is to simply notify all entities within your drinking water protection area. An invitation to join your drinking water protection team for a round table discussion is the first move towards fostering a relationship. It is during this get together that the phenomenon of “entrainment” begins. Entrainment is the synchronization of the “vibrations” at the gathering that can become one. An example: Christian Huygens discovered the phenomenon of entrainment by accident when he, the inventor of the pendulum clock, observed all pendulums were swinging in unison. He deliberately set the pendulums to swing at different rhythms, yet the clocks soon began to swing once again in perfect synchronization. It was later understood that all the clocks followed the beat set by the pendulum with the strongest rhythm.

Have you ever walked into a room full of depressed people and find that after a brief period of time, you

PS Have you been entrained by this article?

too feel depressed? The opposite can also be true. Make the initial invitation for a best management practice assembly a positive, light hearted event.

Have the attendees leave appreciating the importance of source water. Entice them with the acknowledgement of a “green award” for their business. Positive public relations does as much for a business as negative publicity.

The most difficult level of effective measurement for a best management practice is that in dealing with your consumers (homeowners). Let your consumers know that household hazardous materials, over fertilization of yards, improper maintenance of septic systems can lead to the pollution of source water. Flyers can be an economical method to keep the awareness level higher than usual. Invite area residents to be a part of the drinking water protection team. Many people of the community, (i.e. pastors, rotary clubs, scouts, etc.) make good volunteers.

Contact your city and county government planning divisions and make them aware of the area that has been designated as the source of your drinking water, particularly in the event of a major spill of a hazardous substance. Knowledge on all parties is a light load to carry.

Aggressive best management practices can include a property purchase or change in zoning ordinances. Effective? Yes! Probable? No! The fact of the matter is we need to apply management methods that are realistic and not “Pie in the Sky”.

Unfortunately, time, money and resources hinder our effectiveness of implementing any best management practices, primarily if you are a small public water system. The protection area is smaller, but so are those resources.

Time wise, you may be looking at eight hours annually to keep a water protection effort going strong. Realistic practices, along with baby steps in time will show an intrinsic value that cannot be measured. If you wish for assistance in outlining the curriculum of source water protection, always feel welcome to call our office at 503-873-8353. The best of everything that life has to offer! Mr. OpTIMist