

Hertford County Rural Water Corporation Wellhead Protection Activities

In August of 2019, Hertford County Public Works Manager, Ms. Rebecca Turner, contacted the North Carolina Rural Water Association expressing an interest in developing a voluntary Wellhead Protection Plan to protect the water quality of their four wells that are a little over three hundred feet deep, and provide water to approximately 8,000 people throughout the county. The NCRWA Source Water Protection Specialist set up a meeting with Ms. Turner as soon as was possible to provide the needed technical assistance. From the very first meeting, it was obvious that the Public Works Manager was extremely knowledgeable about her water system. She had been in the water industry for many years but, though she had only been employed by the county for about a year, she had given a great deal of thought to the protection of her wells and the county's water supply quality.

It is the mission of a Wellhead Protection Plan to raise awareness about various types of potential contaminant sources (PSCs) found in close proximity to water supply wells and to develop management strategies to address the PCSs that are identified during the development of a plan. With each mention of a possible threat to the county's water supply Ms. Turner made it clear that she had already thought about the threat and had addressed the issue the best that she knew how by taking proactive steps to divert the possibility of a contamination event of the county's wells. The following are some examples of the actions she had taken before ever beginning to develop a Wellhead Protection Plan.

There are a number of properties within Hertford County's WHPAs that are likely used as farm fields for crops. Exact crops grown and uses of the property is difficult to determine because the property is usually rented and there is a network of farmers who exchange fields for various reasons, but the county has been proactive in considering practices occurring within their WHPAs that might threaten the quality of their groundwater. Farmers in the past were using a fire hydrant near one of the county's wells to fill containers for mixing chemicals and irrigation. Upon learning of this practice, the county met with local Farm Bureau officials and requested that the practice be discontinued immediately. The county is now providing a hydrant for local farmers to use to obtain 1,000 gallons of water using appropriate methods to prevent the possibility of backflow or spillage near the well. Farmers have also been asked to cease with the spraying of any Glyphosate products or herbicides near the county's wells or the water storage tanks. The county continues to monitor activities near their wells and take appropriate actions should they observe any threats.

Hertford County has contacted the NC Department of Transportation (NC DOT) regarding property it owns across Highway 11 from Well # 2 and notified them of their location within a Wellhead Protection Area. They discussed the importance of being aware of how their activities could affect groundwater quality if not monitored. The county will continue to provide educational material regarding groundwater protection to the NC DOT and to monitor their activities. Currently, animal burial activities take place just outside of the WHPA and are never deep enough to encounter groundwater in the area. The county will also propose that the DOT use another property a significant distance from any water supply wells to bury animals killed on the roads.

Hertford County is providing as much education as possible to their water users. They have met with individuals as well as business operations within the county to explain the importance of

protecting their water quality. Their staff has attended a Chemical Spill Response class, which addressed the issues of protecting the Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPAs) from an incident on the highway, on farmland or from the air. Tri County Airport is located in the county, though not near the WHPAs.

With every request for information, expression of concern about a practice, activity or land use, Ms. Turner was either one step ahead of the Source Water Specialist and had already addressed the concern or was more than willing to cooperate and provide more information or follow suggestions about protecting the quality of water supplied by her wells. Her willingness to meet with and educate the public about their water supply is exemplary and the example she sets should be followed by every public water supply operator.