

Advisory Council on Wells and Borings Meeting

WELL MANAGEMENT SECTION

Date September 3, 2025

Location Hybrid Meeting

Attendees **In Person:** Tannie Eshenaur, David Henrich, Bruce Johnson, David Kill, Mike Liljigren, Jordan Mayer, Danny Nubbe, Roger Renner, Mike Steffl, Joe Stevens, Gabe Sweet

Virtually: David Duffey, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Richard Lamb, Don McKeever, Steven Traut

Others Present: Avery Guertin, Kelly Medellin, Jon Olson, Teresa Purrington, Andrew Retzler, Tony Runkel, Jenn Weier

Absent: Ed Lenz

Call to Order

David Henrich, Chair, called the meeting to order. Kelly went through roll call.

Approval of meeting agenda

David Kill made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Mike Steffl seconded the motion. Mike Steffl asked to talk about pvc couplings, Danny Nubbe seconded the motion. Roger Renner asked to include public water supply well water care accessibility, seconded by Mike Steffl. David Henrich asked to move Old Business to right before the Open Forum, no opposition, motion carries. David Henrich asked the council to vote on the motion to approve the revised agenda with those in favor say “aye” and those opposed say “nay”. Motion carries.

Approval of last meeting minutes

Danny Nubbe made a motion to accept the Advisory Council minutes from June 4, 2025. Roger Renner seconded the motion. David Henrich asked the council to vote on the motion to approve the minutes with those in favor say “aye” and those opposed say “nay”. Motion carries.

New Business

Education Topic: MGS Guidance

Andrew Retzler and Tony Runkel from the Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS) reported on the Coon Valley Member (of the Prairie Du Chien Group) vs. Jordan Sandstone in Minnesota. These two formations can be difficult to differentiate from one another at times. Andrew Retzler presented a report on the guidance they put together to disseminate to the community.

Andrew Retzler stated that The Coon Valley member is the lowermost unit of the Prairie Du Chien Group. The Coon Valley Member can vary in thickness and be absent in parts of the Twin Cities Metro. It can also look very similar to the Jordan Sandstone which underlies it in the area. This can make the Coon Valley difficult to differentiate from the Jordan Sandstone. He stated that the Coon Valley Member was influenced by tides, which makes it chaotic and dynamic. Because of this, there's a lot more variability in rock types associated with it. He showed photos of different cuttings sets of what the Coon Valley and Jordan Sandstone can look like. Samples containing dolostone are the Coon Valley Member, which can include shale and sandstone. When the Coon Valley is pure quartz sand (similar to the Jordan Sandstone), the main way to tell them apart is the grain sorting. Poorly sorted sand implies it is the Coon Valley. At times, a gamma log can be used to differentiate the two units. He stated that MGS is continually mapping and reporting and suggested referring to MWI and RI-65, 2008. MGS is here to help and aids drillers in identifying the Coon Valley Member. Tony Runkel and Andrew Retzler answered council questions. Jenn Weier stated that the guidance is helpful and gives guidance for what contractors can do. She asked if the old interpretation (old MGS maps that do not reference the Coon Valley) will be updated. Andrew Retzler stated there are older publications out there, but contractors should contact the MGS to see their updated maps. Teresa thanked MGS for providing education to the council the last couple meetings. She asked the council how this guidance should be presented to contractors. Tony Runkel stated they can post it on MGS website. Teresa asked that they send us a link once it's posted on their website, and MDH will send out a GovDelivery. Teresa asked if there are any other areas where MDH could educate the council. David Henrich stated it's interesting to know what MGS is doing and if they have new studies. Teresa asked Jordan if MGS could provide regular updates to the council. Jordan stated MGS is always updating maps and would have information to share.

MDH Announcements

Water Policy/Clean Water Fund updates

Tannie Eshenaur reported on the Water Policy Center (WPC) and SE MN Nitrate response. The workplan is based on three phases and MDH is currently in Phase Two in collaboration with Department of Agriculture. Tannie reported on the Tap-In collaboration with local public health and soil and water conservation districts in the eight counties. Through Tap-In MDH offers testing for coliform bacteria, nitrate, arsenic, manganese, and lead. Tannie reported that the Olmsted laboratory has sent out over 1700 test kits. In the well test results, lead remains high. The lead is not coming from the groundwater but rather from well parts or household plumbing. David Kill asked about Mayo providing testing for arsenic. Tannie stated she is aware of this and that it is a project funded through LCCMR to the MN Well Owners Organization, MN Ground Water Association, and Freshwater.

Jenn Weier asked how and who is doing the outreach and education. Tannie responded that everyone is doing outreach, the counties (SWCDs and LPH) and MDH. MDH found that collaborating with electric cooperatives in providing an announcement in their newsletters gained a better response for well test kits. David Henrich stated working with at least one contractor to work one-on-one might be beneficial. Gabe Sweet asked if MDH or counties have provided outreach at local fairs. Tannie stated counties and SWCD have been providing that outreach.

Mitigation in the form of reverse osmosis systems is offered for households through the Department of Agriculture. There have been 200 systems installed by the end of June 2025.

MDH has been working with individual counties to develop contracts for conducting well inventories and currently has contracts in place for five counties. MGS has provided staff and county training to ensure that the data can easily be inputted into the County Well Index.

Tannie reported on 2025 Water Policy Report. The Environmental Quality Board have approved the final draft. The report highlights nitrates, PFAS, chlorides, geogenic contaminants, and high-volume water users. The issue of high-volume water users has come to the Clean Water Council Policy Committee. Tannie reported on the Water Policy Center's work with the University of Minnesota's Center for Changing Landscapes in conducting a survey to learn more about private well owners/users knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. They have sent out 4,000 surveys to residents in 52 counties and are getting a good return rate. WPC has a second contract with the UMN Extension to build a private well peer leaders network offering well testing clinics.

Rulemaking updates

Avery Guertin reported on rulemaking updates for the Submerged Closed Loop Heat Exchanger (SCLHE) rulemaking. David Henrich asked for clarity as to when we might engage in a comprehensive rule revision. Avery responded that this would be a big project and we could tackle topics rather than a full chapter rewrite. David Henrich responded that topics are related and interconnected. Teresa asked if reshaping the rule so that it's in sections by topic would be a potential way to revise the rule. She stated that creating a cleaning chapter would make it more efficient, easier to understand, and easier to open for revisions. David Henrich stated we should put together priorities before we begin. Avery stated that priorities and timelines would need to be fluid, because we could get additional legislative directives during that time. Gabe Sweet asked if organizing the rule by topic would take substantial time. Teresa stated that each topic could go through a review and completed before we move onto another. Gabe Sweet asked how we would start this. Teresa responded that we were bound by legislation right now. David Henrich responded that we could start putting together a priority list.

Teresa reported that there was a hydrogen summit in Duluth, and asked Mike Liljgren to report on the summit as he attended. Was put on Natural Resource Institute, as they were given money for hydrogen research. There is a lot of interest in exploration and naturally producing hydrogen.

Well Management updates

Teresa Purrington reported on Well Management Section updates. She reported on legislative activities fees that includes communication, website, update/create forms, create new

processes, fee adjustments with MNiT and Maintenance Permit fee structure. Teresa reported on ancillary legislative activities with the water service line and exploration/SCLHE expedited rulemaking. Teresa reported we've been working on Delegated Well Programs agreements to align with other sections, as they haven't been revised since 2010. Teresa reported that we've been updating our variance process to align with other sections and create an efficient process.

Teresa reported on the MDH Licensing System with a potential launch date of November 2025. We have 32 credentials and processes and 18 are complete. We're building a data lake, so the data is reportable and retrievable. The project vision is to reduce wait time, improve data integrity, increase transparency and make electronic payments.

New Business

Advice Topic: Unsealing sealed wells

Jennifer Weier reported on unsealing sealed wells. MDH staff receive questions from property owners and LWCs working for them about cleaning out and using a well that has already been sealed. Minnesota Rules, part 4725.3850, subpart 8 prohibits disturbing sealing material in a well that has been sealed, and a variance would be required if the well was sealed with a sealing record submitted to MDH. Well Management staff have discussed this topic, and have reservations about MDH approving variances, particularly if the well does not meet current requirements of Minnesota Rules, chapter 4725. Well Management is looking for the council's input. The council discussed the topic and LWCs on the council stated when they are approached with this question from well owners, and they respond that it is a bad idea. The council agreed cleaning out and reusing sealed wells should not be allowed, and LWCs should reference the rule.

Council Member Open Forum

The council discussed industry hot topics, including product/material review process and the council's involvement.

- Mike Steffl reported on pvc casings and couplings. Teresa showed a picture of the pvc coupling for reference. Was told a pvc 12-inch coupling doesn't meet the code. Received notification that the 4–5-inch couplings were approved but the manufacturer states they are not approved for vertical use. Teresa stated that Mark Malmanger is the subject matter expert to answer this question but is out of the office on leave. Teresa stated it sounds like this process would require a variance. Teresa asked what other states use. Jenn Weier responded that there are other things you can use, and other states don't have this in their rules, like North Dakota. Mike Steffl stated the industry is continually evolving and has learned from mistakes in the past and would appreciate a consistent and clear message as to how to proceed.
- Roger Renner had a question about the public water supply well records. Suggested a secure way to access those records. Teresa responded that this doesn't involve our program, but Drinking Water Protection. She will contact Drinking Water Protection. This would be another IT project to provide secure documentation. Teresa stated that an advice topic in the future would be a presentation from the CWI/MWI workgroup.

- David Henrich asked if there are other education topics the council is interested in learning. Mindy Erickson, an expert on arsenic occurrence, suggested by David Kill. David Henrich stated water allocation. Teresa suggested hydrogen and asked Gabe Sweet for a suggested contact. Don McKeever suggested rural vs. metro irrigation water. Tannie stated that DNR appropriation has seasonal reports. Teresa asked Don if there's still interest in methane in well water. Don stated that and hydrogen would be beneficial.

Old Business

Bisected screens in a single aquifer and risk to aquifer protection

CANCELLED

David Henrich motioned to move Old Business to after lunch to accommodate Education Topic speaker's schedules. Motion carries.

Next meeting

Date: December 3, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Location: MPCA

Adjourn

David Kill moved to end the meeting. Danny Nubbe seconded the motion. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned.

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