

Advisory Council on Wells and Borings Meeting

WELL MANAGEMENT SECTION

Date March 4, 2026

Location Hybrid Meeting

Attendees **In Person:** David Duffey, Tannie Eshenaur, David Henrich, Bruce Johnson, David Kill, Ed Lenz, Jordan Mayer, Don McKeever, Danny Nubbe, Roger Renner, Mike Steffl, Joe Stevens

Virtually: Bruce Johnson, Richard Lamb, Gabe Sweet, Steven Traut

Others Present: Kiel Jenkin, Jacob Knutson, Mark Malmanger, Kelly Medellin, Windsor Molnar, Jon Olson, Teresa Purrington, Cody Tennant, Jennifer Weier

Absent: Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Mike Liljigren

Call to order

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

Approval of last meeting minutes

Mike Steffl made a motion to accept the Advisory Council minutes from December 3, 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.

Approval of meeting agenda

Danny Nubbe made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. David Kill seconded the motion. David Henrich asked to add data centers and water use at open forum. 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.

New staff introduction

Teresa Purrington introduced Jacob Knutson (Jank) to the Operations Unit. Jank stated that he has a background in technology and real estate transactions. Teresa also reported on the space modernization currently in the Freeman building. We should all be back in the office in July.

Old business

Threaded PVC Pitless Adaptors

Mark Malmanger reported on slip by thread PVC transition couplings, transition from a PVC cased well to a steel pitless unit. Mark stated they reviewed the information again and spoke to Spears, Certainteed, and Charlotte. All three manufacturers do not support using their PVC coupling for coupling PVC well casing to a steel pitless unit. Mark also explained that 4-inch and 5-inch diameter slip by thread PVC transition couplings meet MN Rules, chapter 4725 requirements and can currently be used. Mark outlined three currently available and approved alternative options that meet rule requirements: use a compression gasket coupling, extend the PVC casing above ground surface and use a top discharge, or use steel well casing. Mike Steffl asked whether changes to approved couplings could be considered in the next rule revision. Teresa responded that MDH plans to reopen Chapter 4725 for revisions, provided no other legislatively mandated rulemaking efforts take priority.

New business

MDH announcements

Water Policy/Clean Water Fund updates

Tannie Eshenaur reported on the Water Policy Center (WPC) and multiagency and the southeast Minnesota nitrate response. Tannie reported on recent social science research from the University of Minnesota and how that is being used to communicate with private well users. For example, together with local partners, they recently sent out reminder postcards to requestors and had a great response. Tannie showed a bar graph the goals, requests, and kits returned by county. Over all, 53% of test kits have been returned. David Kill asked how often they're sending out postcards. Tannie responded that they're taking turns sending out postcards to the counties, so that the lab is not overwhelmed with samples.

She also reported on the private well test quarterly results. Lead results are at 40% and nitrate is at 7% which is lower than expected. She also reported that WPC is in the process of hiring a data analyst. Danny Nubbe asked where in the home the instructions say to take the water sample, as this could skew the results. Tannie stated she's unsure, as the lab sends out those instructions. David Henrich stated seeing the lead results, it's probably coming from the kitchen tap.

As of January, there have been 244 reverse osmosis systems installed. Out of all the wells where reverse osmosis units were installed, 21 were due to cyanazine exceedances and 14 had exceedances for both nitrate and cyanazine.

Tannie reported that they have started a mass media campaign with MP+G to promote private well water testing in southeast Minnesota. Ed Lenz suggested YouTube advertisements based on zip codes. Tannie reported they have targeted their population with specific demographics on Facebook.

There are two cost benefit analyses for well testing and mitigation as part of increasing support for private well users. Phase I is complete and covers the cost and effectiveness of mitigation approaches for individual households. Phase II will examine the costs and public health benefits (death and disease prevented) at a statewide level and is being conducted by the University of Minnesota's Applied Economics department.

Tannie reported on the Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan. This is a 10-year strategic plan, covering from 2024 until 2034. There are five high level goals looking at public and private drinking water from the source to the tap. Strategy 2.2 explains the plan to support and grow the public water operator and licensed well contractor workforces. The plan also addresses supporting small public water systems. In Minnesota, there are 500 systems serving cities with a population of 500 or less. Generally, a community water system is a small system if it serves fewer than 3,300 people according to US EPA. These systems include community municipal systems, nonmunicipal community systems, and noncommunity systems. MDH will provide support in many ways, including a steering committee, technical support, grants assistance, and one source water protection planner dedicated to small systems. She also reported on the many key actions to support small systems in the plan. Mike Steffl asked Tannie to initiate a conversation with the water well operators' group to see if a licensed well contractor can join that group. Danny Nubbe agreed and responded that statutory regulations don't always take into consideration the people that should be included in the statutes and rules. Teresa asked if MWWA has someone who monitors statutory regulations. Tannie responded that there are things that the council can do, including sending a letter of support to the Clean Water Council. Teresa asked about how the licensed well contractors learn about legislation at the Capitol. David Henrich responded that often the responses tend to be reactionary. Joe Stevens stated that contractors should stick their neck out from time to time and meet with those making decisions. He also offered his time to meet with people.

Well Management updates

Teresa Purrington reported on Well Management Section updates, including the program budget. In 2025, we had the legislative fee increase. Program revenue decreased to \$3 - \$3.1 million in the past three fiscal years. Legislature maintained the operational budget at \$3.9 million with the 2025 fee increases. In FY26 so far, we are on trajectory to \$3.5 million which is a \$400,000 shortfall. Mike Steffl asked about increasing municipal notification fees. Teresa stated that because we just had a fee increase, that probably would be out of scope in the legislative year. Mike Steffl suggested evaluating the cost structure and time required for different types of water supply wells to assess resource allocation and identify potential fee adjustment proposals.

Rulemaking updates

Teresa Purrington reported on Well Management Rulemaking updates from 2022 to 2026. She stated that Portland Cement was agency initiated, but from 2023 to now, we've been focusing on rules that were legislatively directed. Those should be completed in May 2026. The plan is to dive into the revision of chapter 4725. There are conversations with MDH taking on construction and sealing of gas wells and this would be another legislative directed rulemaking.

eLicensing updates

Teresa Purrington reported updates on the MDH Licensing System online database. Phase 1 launched December 4, and Phase 2 launch is tentatively March 19. She went through the list of processes that will be launched. There are a lot of moving parts for Phase 2 launch, including the connection with MWI/CWI. Phase 3 will tentatively launch in May and will focus on maintenance permits.

Chair topic: Data Centers

David Henrich reported on data centers. He stated he connected with Dr. Alley and Chuck Job and referenced an article from 01/26 WWJ “Data Centers Have Become a Flashpoint Topic.” He reported data centers can be difficult without using water and heat exchange opportunities are limited. He stated that data center loads are a challenge, as they don’t follow conventional building heating and cooling. He stated that geothermal systems could play a significant role in reducing data center water use.

Education topic: MNELAP Accreditation

Windsor Molnar and Cody Tennant from MDH reported on MNELAP Accreditation. Windsor Molnar reported on why accreditation matters to protect the public and drillers. Labs have regulatory requirements they must follow to become accredited, that include creating a quality manual and standard operating procedures, creating a list of the detection and reporting limits, two passing proficiency tests, an assessment by an Assessor, and finding a technical director with specific requirements. He reported on the costs associated with being an accredited lab, as well as the equipment needed to start a lab.

Cody Tennant reported on the costs associated with nitrate and arsenic instrumentation. He also reported that any sampling effort should include an initial inspection of procedures and supplies and that field practices must be in place to verify proper labeling, unique identification, location and collection techniques. He reported on getting samples to the lab, including thermal preservation, holding time requirements, lab courier services and shipping. He reported that there are many scenarios to consider that can affect the well sample.

David Henrich asked what they are doing to help rural Minnesota create accredited labs. Winsor Molnar reported that they have advocated to reduce the requirements in place in hiring a technical director. The requirements are in statute and would need to be changed in order to accommodate these changes.

Advice topic: Contractor License Examination

Kiel Jenkin from MDH reported on the contractor license examination. He reported that MDH identified areas of improvement, are creating a proposed plan, and would like the council expertise. He reported that there’s a need for more robust testing, for increased oversight, and for increased pre-exam support and materials. There are certain contractors that receive less oversight like Pump/Pitless, Sealing and Explorers.

Kiel Jenkin reported on the MDH proposed plan. Tier 1 would be immediate to change the passing score from 75% to at least 80% and start having those conversations from the council. Tier 2 would be intermediate, including reevaluating current exams and evaluating testing accessibility versus MDH staff resources. Tier 3 would be long-term including evaluating rules, testing formats, and increasing oversight.

Kiel Jenkin asked the council if they wanted to be involved in the process, what areas of MDH contractor licensing are strengths versus areas that need improvement, and any thoughts on the immediate changes proposed. Danny Nubbe asked about the oral examination. Teresa Purrington responded that it’s important for the council to use their time to advise MDH. Joe Stevens responded that we could get a list of contractors that would be willing to mentor new

contractors. Steve thought it would be helpful to have inspectors review the first 5-10 wells they drill. David Henrich stated there could be license tiers, where they could acquire experience through the years. Steve stated that the geology of the state needs to be considered as well. Teresa responded if there's going to be rule changes, this could be an opportunity to change the way we license contractors.

Council member open forum

The council discussed industry hot topics:

- David Henrich reported that we might want to consider making the meetings longer, as we don't have time to cover all the topics.

Next meeting

Date: June 3, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Location: MPCA

Adjourn

Danny Nubbe moved to end the meeting. Joe Stevens seconded the motion. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned.

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