

WELLHEAD PROTECTION COMMITTEE – MASTER PLAN 2009

The work of the Wellhead Protection Committee (WPC), which was formed by the Board of Water Commissioners in November 2007, is focused on two long-standing problems: the quality and quantity of the water supply.

Historically, most of Wayland's wells and delivery system were established more than 50 years ago, before the post-war development turned the town from a rural farm community to a developed suburb. Prior to the 2009 construction of the Baldwin Treatment Plant, the Happy Hollow wells near the high school site provided the majority of water for Wayland. Until a few years ago when new development on the high school site near those wells raised residents' concerns, there was little attention being paid to the potential impacts on well water quality (contamination reaching the wells from human-related activity), or water quantity (the amount of water soaking into the ground around the wells).

The WPC studies, assesses, and advocates for mitigation measures for existing impacts near wellsites throughout Wayland as well as potential impacts related to further development. The work of the committee not only helps to protect the water supply but may also contribute to significant future savings for the town by eliminating the need for additional water treatment facilities.

Hydrologically, watersheds rather than town boundary lines drawn on maps are meaningful. Wayland is in the Concord River watershed, which includes the Sudbury and Assabet River sub-watersheds. Under the Water Management Act the state takes responsibility for managing the water within each watershed, partially by issuing permits that limit the amount of water that each town can remove, so that upstream towns don't remove more than their share at the expense of downstream towns. It also sets strict allocations of residential per capita water usage with which Wayland has repeatedly not complied. The (former) Water Department has attempted to deal with the issue of reducing water usage with various measures including rate restructuring to promote water conservation. The WPC approaches the problem through public education and assessment of potential new regulations.

The task of supplying safe and adequate water to Wayland's residents has always been demanding, but now many new treatments processes, water quality tests, and regulatory compliance demands have made this goal more challenging than ever. The WPC intends to pursue grant and loan programs through state and federal agencies as well as other possible sources of funding for assistance with its initiatives.

Beyond the operational demands of supplying water, a wave of new responsibilities has been added to the Water Division's tasks and have become important to the work of the WPC. Among the evolving challenges being studied by the committee are: state and federally-mandated water conservation programs to reduce water use; land-use monitoring and wellhead protection in those areas in town which contribute to the groundwater and well withdrawal; the protection and proposed expansion of significant source-water protection areas; integrating the work of the Water Division with activities of other boards concerning such water-related issues as private well and irrigation system monitoring, stormwater management techniques and 'green' technology; the coordination of emergency response efforts with respect to source-water protection and water supply continuity; supporting the goals of the Town's Aquifer Protection District; and educational outreach to the schools and community.