Private Well Workshop Minutes

September 19, 2019

Workgroup on ideas for outreach to private well users

Sille Larsen opened the meeting with a short presentation on an overview of why we are talking about these outreach materials

* This topic had the most interest from the workshop we had previously where we put ideas for focus areas on post-it notes.
* We want to find out if there are gaps in the information that is available to users of private wells in order to make that information more available.

Attending:

* Sille Larsen – VDH
* Chrissy Millar – VDH
* Diana Butler - Vermont rural water Association
* Laura Woodard – ATC
* Mark Johnson – RCAP Solutions
* John Kim – Vermont Geological Survey
* Liz Royer – Vermont rural water Association
* Nate Kai – DEC
* Graham Bradley – DEC
* Someone on phone from AOT

Sille started by going over the resources available on the Department of Health website:

https://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/drinking-water

* Content of webpage:
* Basic facts about public and private drinking water.
* Table with recommended testing
* Table with contaminants that VDH doesn’t recommend testing for but that people are asking about.
  + Tips for homeowners, such as “buying or selling a home”
* Also on the main page is a link to the factsheets on recommended testing.
  + A new factsheet has been developed covering the new required testing under Act 161. This testing differs from our recommended testing (rec. Kit A, C and RA vs req. Kit A, ID, RA and lead first draw).
* Also on the main page is a video on how to take a water sample
* A video on common problems with different well types
* A link to a presentation about Vermont private drinking water
* A link to the Public Health Laboratory website which contains a link to private labs in the state

Discussion points to the above:

Is recommendation for home buyers/sellers on the webpage (Kit A, C, RA)? Is it prominent and detailed enough? Should we have a page that outlines what the term “potability” means? This word has different meanings to realtors, mortgage lenders, the DOH, etc. Does Endyne have a home owners package? How will folks digging a new well know about the testing requirements? - No good way to get this information out to them.

DEC’s website on private drinking water

https://dec.vermont.gov/water/drinking-water

* Water well flooding on DEC website
* Water testing requirement
* Who at DEC can rename these pages to make them more useful to others? Graham Bradley will work on this.
* The health department dw-webpages should link to these resources.

VT Geological Survey website

* The website should also be relevant to private well owners, but there is no direct mentioning of private wells.
* You can search by town and find information about studies done by VGS – the Health Department DW webpage can potentially link to this resource. (Google: “Town Index of publication”)

RCAP presentation:

* Rural Community Assistance Partnership
  + Mark Johnson is the Vermont representative for RCAP solutions
  + He performs site visits to discuss well issues with homeowners 1 on 1 using the “private well class” well assessment tool (privatewellclass.org)
  + RCAP performs 20 to 50 well assessments per state per year (Mark generally does 20-30 site assessments in a year)
  + People are referred to Mark from VDH Drinking Water
  + VDH Drinking Water program provides Mark with free water testing kits to use on site visits
  + Another great resources: privatewellclass.org
    - Webinars about water and wastewater for private home owners and public health professionals.
    - PDF’s that form a class sent to your email address

Discussion:

Does RCAP have income level restrictions? Not necessarily, this is largely determined by Mark. VDH Drinking Water webpages should have information about the program and refer people to Mark.

General discussion:

Laura Woodrd asked who is available to collect water samples from private wells if the homeowner is not comfortable doing it? -> well drillers, home inspectors, water treatment specialists. She suggested that we recommend/invite contract operators/consultants to help homeowners with collecting water samples? Diane Butler/Laura Woodard were not sure such a list was possible or whether contract operators would be interested in doing the work. Could be a good resource for those on FHA-VA loans, who need a third party person to collect the sample.

* Outreach ideas: Have flyers and info-material available near water jug filling locations. A lot of people get water from the coop because they suspect their water is contaminated.
* Resources for renters and rights should have its own page on VDH Drinking Water website. The information should be shared with:
  + Vermont Landlords association
  + Agency of commerce
  + Champlain office of economic opportunity

Maybe one of the above organizations can help VDH drinking water reach tenants about their rights to potable drinking water.

Meeting adjourned at 3pm.