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Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2013 10:44 PM
To: Living Water Smart ENV:EX; Barnett.MLA, Donna LASS:EX; Wei, Mike ENV:EX
Cc: *****Personal Identifiers Removed*****
Subject: Comments on the new water sustainability act.

From: Peter Epp

Hillside Pumps & Water Treatment

In the "what we heard so far" section under Hillside Pumps you will find a letter I sent to John Slater in 2009. This is kind of an update to that letter; things still need work..... lots of good intentions but it is hard to get information to those who need it.

This picture is from November 1, 2013. It was taken at a new home that is under construction. It shows several violations of the ground water protection regulation. I have sent this picture to Mike Wei , Ministry of....I hope they can deal with this particular site and help the home owner. We also need to come up with a better management strategy that gets information to those who need it. Mike suggested I forward the comments about permits. I thought it best if I send most of what I shared with Mike about the site to give some context to the issue at hand.

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This home owner needs some help before he corrupts his new well and possibly the neighborhood water supply. I was there on Friday, November 1st to work with the sewer contractor installing an effluent pump for him. I noticed the well pump was already installed by some one else and the yellow safety rope was wrapped around the outside of the well casing. That is not the way to tie off a safety rope. To tie off the rope like they have done you have to destroy the vermin proof part of the well cap. I had to go for a closer look. Whoever does this has done it several other places which I have seen before from the street, but never up close. Whoever does this does not understand the regulations.

Let me try to describe the details of the picture for you. Where the well and house are they have only a foot or two of soil and then you get into soft rock or shale. We typically dig six foot ditches to keep pipes from freezing. The hoe operator doing the sewer system said they had to get a large excavator to dig the basement and do the well ditch. If you look in the picture at the ground around the well and the stock trough site all you see is fist sized rock. The ditch to the septic tanks was similar; it is pretty rugged ground. They had to bring in sand to bed the sewer pipe. The well cap was a vermin proof type but they have knocked out one of the bug screens so they could pull the rope through (1 inch hole now with a small rope in it). Then they wrapped it around the well several times and tied it to the wire conduit. The set screw you would use to secure the cap to the well casing is broken and missing; looks like they drilled and put a wood screw in to hold the cap down. I wiggled the cap to see if it was secure, it rattles on the well casing. They lost or threw away the rubber gasket, it would not rattle if the gasket was there. Well cap will no longer be vermin proof. Insects like ants will get in and bring grass clippings and I suspect a small mouse could get in past the rope. That is not the worst part. I never measured but 15 or 20 feet from the well they have roughed in for a heated stock trough along with a yard hydrant. You will see a pipe and wire sticking up in the background past the well. I

do not like stock troughs beside wells at the best of times but in this ground it is a real hazard. The livestock or horses are going to leave a manure pile around the water trough. In this case it is twenty feet from our well and slightly higher, so the ditch will run to the well. The excavated areas are going to be so open and porous that any heavy rain and all the spring snow melt water is going to fill the ditch lines and head for the well. There is no way you can get a good surface seal if it is all fractured rock. Having manure on the ground is a potential contaminate..... This site will be exceptionally bad for infiltration because of the rock. The water will run freely and quickly filling the ditch line with no filtering action from soils. It is going to funnel everything towards the well.

A few thoughts to ponder.

Under the current rules the well driller is supposed to make sure the well is 100 feet from any source of contamination. Is it really his responsibility? Not very practical in this situation. Home owner would be a better candidate for that responsibility. When the driller made the hole it was an empty lot. This has all happened after he left.

The pump installer should have known better..... obviously that is not the case and should be investigated. My guess is a plumbing contractor who said he would not register as a pump installer. He thinks he knows how to do it and has been doing it for years; just like our grandfathered contractors he is self taught. My point here is that government regulations did not work to help this well owner. Registering pump installers and grandfathering in most of them did nothing to improve quality of work and there is no provisions to measure how we are doing with compliance. Do contractors actually know what they are doing? It has not stopped this guy from doing what ever he wants and I would argue he is putting ground water at risk. When are we going to start keeping records so we can measure compliance with regulations? I have never signed off or filled in a form.

Last we have the home owner. They will go and put stock troughs and yard hydrants beside wells because they do not know any better. They can have the backhoe operator do it or they may have a back hoe on the farm and do it themselves. I have been asked to hook up the pipes many times. We try to discourage it but it is a fairly common practice with the other pump contractors. They would not be breaking any laws installing a yard hydrant and stock trough. All we regulate is the pump installation in the well. Maybe give that some more thought.....

Two comments regarding single family wells. First, reading the new Water Sustainability Act discussion paper they are going to exempt single family wells. I think that is a mistake. This home owner needed some information so he could police the work done around his well. He also needs to know how to maintain and look after his well. How is he to know these things if he is not told? In this situation he is going to spend more money than needed to fix stupid. A simple permit process with good planning booklets would be very helpful for home owners. Making a permit required for all wells would ensure everyone got the information in a timely manner. Second, I would also suggest a very clear statement that your right to FREE water for domestic use is an inalienable right. Getting that message to every one would be appropriate. No new taxes are planned, BUT that right to water does not include the right to contaminate water and to that end we need to educate and permit or register ALL WELLS so we know they meet minimum well head standards, are located in a safe place and are not likely to contribute to ground water

pollution. The community has a right to know that all wells are safe and not a hazard.

Looking at this site my thoughts go to the Dog Creek Road subdivision and the nitrate contamination issues they have. This little community has to figure out how to deal with a contaminated water source. The Ministry of Environment report is fairly blunt - they need to be hooked up to City water. The ground water is all contaminated. No one knows exactly where the contamination comes from; most likely it is sites similar to the one I have just described..... Regulators need to be pushing for more meaningful changes before we build too many more dangerous water systems like the one I just showed you and contaminate more water sources. Here the evidence is that current regulations are not up to that challenge..... The intentions are good but we need to work on a better management strategy, one every one can afford.

But what really gets me going and why I took the time to write is that when I see sites like this where contractors are trying to save a dollar and do work for cheap could be creating another Dog creek road subdivision.....Who is going to speak for the home owner / tax payer? all they know is one guy will do it for less.

Thanks for your time.

Peter Epp
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Journeyman Plumber, Fixing water systems Since 1990.