

Abstract Submission 2: 2009 New England Private Well Water Symposium

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Ten Reasons Why Water Utilities Should Embrace Private Wells

Having taken a radically different regulatory trajectory in past decades from private wells, public water suppliers have often been indifferent – even *hostile* – to the suggestion that they need to identify, monitor, and even protect private-well quality in their watersheds: “Not our problem.”; “Who needs the potential liability?”; and “What’s there to learn?” But after a recent USGS Congressional briefing on the significance of private-well water quality and with expanding competition for groundwater resources from corporate bottlers and large-user industry, water utilities may have reasons to show private wells some respect - *at least ten!*

One reason is *advanced warning* - private wells unfortunately are often sentinel monitors for contamination events that may be threatening public groundwater supplies as has happened in the northeast with below-and-above petroleum spills from tanks and pipelines, from road salt contamination, perchlorate events, salt-water intrusion, elevated arsenic, and emerging contaminants. And the location of unused or abandoned private wells can provide utilities with additional source water protection requirements.

With the emergence of safe-yield stream-flow standards, new storm water requirements, more comprehensive watershed identification and aquifer planning, and stricter water quality regulation, groundwater-based water utilities need more accurate and timely groundwater data to protect source waters, often including those in neighboring communities – often served only by private wells. And regional and state comprehensive watershed planning requires cross-border and intra-utility cooperation as never before.

As land-use pressures increase impacts on aquifer quality, the re-acquisition of groundwater data points from private well testing from real estate transfers can be instantly added to state GIS mapping overlays providing water utilities with inexpensive, yet accurate aquifer characterization. Other utility needs include watershed planning and protection funding, better raw-water data, land-use “buffers” from private wells, and efficient ways to monitor impacts on groundwater from dam removals. Finally, the public involvement and information provided by private well testing assists utilities in expanding citizen awareness of the need for groundwater protection for *all* users in the watershed.

Kurt Tramposch MPH – is an environmental planner and 25-year advocate for residential and community health. He has researched private well regulation since 2003 and presented on the topic at NGWA, NEWWA, and UMass Water Resources conferences. In 1980's he founded and directed the *Center for Residential Health* and served on a MA-DEP steering committee for an innovative community toxics program. He served as vice-chair of the MDC Sudbury Reservoir Citizen's Advisory Committee, is currently member of the steering committee for the *SuAsCo River Watershed Council* and member of the Groundwater Committee of the *New England Water Works Association*.

After US Marine Corps duty and studies at University of Pennsylvania, he graduated from Cornell (Philosophy – with environmental studies and psychology) and studied landscape architecture and planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He received a Master of Public Health degree (environmental health) from Boston University in 1987. Kurt has resumed graduate studies over the past five years in water policy and management, environmental and health impact assessment, land use planning, and community sustainability at Tufts, Boston University, and Harvard. Member: *US Green Building Council; American Planning Association; American Public Health Association; Green Roofs for Healthy Cities; and the National Ground Water Association* which sponsored the *USDA Well Inspectors Program* he completed in 2007.