

Money can't buy happiness. But...

Clancy Dempsey, Ground Water Specialist

Keeping in mind that the purpose of a wellhead protection plan is to protect the **source** of drinking water, lets quickly go over the primary steps of wellhead protection:

1. Define the Protection Area. Every community water systems has been provided a unique wellhead protection area map.
2. Perform a Contaminant Source Inventory. Quite a few communities have taken the time to identify and document potential contaminants within their wellhead protection area.
3. Manage the wellhead protection area. The point of management is to reduce the risk of drinking water contamination by those items that were documented during the Contaminant Source Inventory.
4. Plan for the future. This includes preparing for emergency and contingency situations that could affect the water system.
5. Involve the public. This can be accomplished through newspaper articles, letters, public meetings and other opportunities.

Of these steps, managing the wellhead protection area can often prove to be the most challenging. Funding, or perhaps a lack of funding, is often a barrier to successfully managing your wellhead protection area. I know that we have all heard the old saying "*Money can't buy happiness.*" But... *money can buy wellhead protection*, or at the very least make it a whole lot easier. Which is why I wanted to share some important information about funding for wellhead protection.

Thanks to the Source Water Program of the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), funding for wellhead protection has been less of an obstacle the past few years. Through this program grants have been awarded for activities that address drinking water quality, quantity, security, and education. Some other points to remember:

- There is \$200,000 available per year with no minimum or maximum on the amount requested.
- Activities can take place in the wellhead protection area and/or associated community.
- Funds are awarded to protect the source of drinking water, not the drinker (i.e. funds can't be used for operation and maintenance of the water system).
- Entities of government (villages, cities), non-profit organizations, and educational institutions can apply.

To get you thinking about the possibilities for your water system, here is a summary of projects that were funded this year (source: www.deq.state.ne.us):

City of Crawford: Crawford Source Water Protection Project – \$26,890

Purchase of an infiltration gallery volumetric weir and recorder; an infiltration gallery and supplemental well field alarm dialer system; installation of check-valves at the

infiltration gallery and supplemental well field; security fencing around the infiltration gallery and the supplemental well field.

Beaver Lake Association, Cass County: Protect Our Water for Tomorrow – \$57,200

Security fencing and security system around the water intake and water treatment facility; source water protection signage within watershed, pamphlets, and an annual festival; lift station warning system to prevent contaminants from overflowing into the lake; spill containment equipment.

City of Nelson: Protecting Our Water for Our Citizens – \$24,750

Decommissioning of an inactive well; lawn sampling kits and fertilizer recommendation materials; nitrate soil sampling; drop-in transducers and water conservation rebates for low pressure showerheads and water-saving toilets; educational materials including newsletters and fliers.

Village of Western: Source Water Protection Project – \$12,000

Storm water drainage project; abandonment of cisterns; deep soil sampling; submersible level transmitter to record and display draw down in water level; educational materials including fliers and published articles.

City of David City: David City Recycled Water Project – \$33,000

Develop a process for treating wastewater to be used for irrigation of city property and agricultural land; plant buffer zone to protect the west park lake against runoff; public education through newspaper articles, web site development, public meetings, and seminars.

City of Albion: City of Albion Source Water Project – \$3,295

Education on septic system maintenance and water conservation through brochures, newspaper articles and informational meetings; water quality sampling equipment for high school biology class; window grates and motion lights for all municipal wells.

Nemaha Country Rural Water District #2: Johnson Wells Source Water Protection Project – \$16,130

Wellhead protection signage; storm water drainage project; security fencing and motion lights for both wells.

Village of Allen: Improving the Water Quality and Usage in Allen, Nebraska – \$10,871

Fencing and berming around the well house and alarm system; water meter for city hydrant to account for water losses; Hach colorimeter for nitrate testing; laptop computer for maintenance of water data.

City of Kearney: Source Water Protection Proposal for Kearney Platte River Well Field – \$17,770

Conduct a contaminant source inventory of the Wellhead Protection Area using GPS; distribute educational materials specific to potential source of contamination.

City of Bayard: City of Bayard Source Water Protection Project – \$12,800

Development of a high school class to educate students on soil and water management practices; installation of irrigation flow meters and cost-share for home study soils and irrigation courses; deep soil sampling for nutrient management; nitrate sampling of all domestic and irrigation wells within the Wellhead Protection Area; GPS unit and laptop computer for locating and mapping potential contaminant sources in the Wellhead Protection Area; educational materials including brochures and newspaper publications.

The next opportunity to apply for these funds will be in spring of 2005. Awards are typically made just a few months later in early summer. A proposal is more likely to be funded if it encompasses all four criteria (drinking water quality, quantity, security, and education). I hope that many readers will take advantage of this opportunity. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Deana Barger, NDEQ Source Water Coordinator, at 1-402-471-2186. Deana mentioned that she will gladly send out additional information, attend board meetings or meet with interested parties to form ideas and discuss potential projects. Thanks for your time.