

Maine Water Utilities Association's Public Awareness Committee Minutes

Mission: The *Public Awareness Committee* shall communicate to the general public on issues important to the drinking water profession and assist the membership in enhancing public awareness in their local communities.

August 28th, 2003, 9:00 AM
Portland Water District, Portland, Maine

Committee Members: Joy Adamson; Mary Jane Dillingham; Kim Marchegiani; Jeffrey McNelly, Jeff Preble, Gary Stevens, Madeline Storer, Brian Tarbuck, Greg Cataldo

Committee Members Present: Brian Tarbuck; Jeff McNelly; Mary Jane Dillingham; Kim Marchegiani, Jeff Preble, Madeline Storer, Greg Cataldo; Michelle Clements; guest Jeff Lacasse

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 AM by Gary Stevens.

- There were no corrections to or comments concerning the previous minutes.
- Kim Marchegiani brought copies of news clippings with her to the meeting. There was general interest in these articles. A good letter to the editor from Wes Haskell at Orono-Veazie was also included that discussed the value of tap water versus buying bottled water.
- Jeff reviewed the status of the website. At this point, the website is being maintained by MWUA personnel, but there has not been much action on updating existing material. Jeff will be contacting the bulletin board people, installing a high speed satellite internet connection and will be talking with the Board about posting individuals' email addresses online. Some individuals may not be happy about having their email posted on the web. Other issues include the fact that many committees do not have much information posted online, but Jeff indicated that this is not a problem, just a preference thing. Some committees choose not to have their meeting minutes publicized which is fine. Brian volunteered to set up the CCR homepage off the MWUA site so that can get kicked off. This will simply list all of the utilities in the Association and provide a link to their CCR as a central clearinghouse for this information. Members that don't have a .pdf or html version of their website will get a copy posted online free. Email your links to your CCR to btarbuck@yahoo.com.
- The Committee discussed Dripal Pursuit and how that might be modified to better reflect drinking water issues instead of just water issues in general. Joy had given a copy of the game to Brian, but he forgot to bring it to the meeting. MJ suggested that we might want to have a Dripal Pursuit competition at the MWUA trade show among operators or managers or system versus system.
- This conversation led to a general commentary about the fabulous marketing tools available to the Association. These currently include Bikers Against E. coli shirts, hats, Watershed Patrol shirts and water wheels. This year, the PAC hopes to branch out and expand the available products to include squirt guns and water bottles. Greg Cataldo will research the water weapons and Jeff Preble will research water bottles.

- Hydrilla was the next topic. MJ will be meeting with Jon McPhedran from Maine DEP next month to discuss what the DEP might suggest for mitigation if hydrilla were to strike a public water supply in Maine. Here's a cool picture of President Bush at the helm of a hydrilla harvester in Texas: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/news/980615a.htm> The current solution proposed by DEP is to use fluridone to combat hydrilla. MWUA is concerned that this chemical treatment is too little too late and would compromise the credibility of water utilities if it were used in the source of a public water supply. Another potential solution is the introduction of "triploid sterile grass carp". Here's an article about this fishy solution to aquatic invasives: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/management/aqua024.html> Stay tuned for MJ's report next month. The MWUA will also need to aggressively market its position on this important issue.
- Jeff McNelly discussed the environmental bond referendum question that will be on this fall's November ballot. The Bureau of Health requested a bond of \$1.8 million to satisfy its funding needs. This will result in a return on investment of approximately 5:1 for federal matching funds. The legislature decided that \$1.8 million was too much to invest in drinking water in Maine so they dropped it 33% to \$1.2 million. The Bureau of Health will have to figure out how to come up with \$600k in loans to close the gap and get the federal match. This seems a bit crazy as taxpayers will wind up paying more than \$600k to get the money, but... The Committee agreed that it is important to get the word out to the membership to call their local legislative representative and explain the need for this money. PAC will wait for direction from the legislative committee before acting.
- Brian discussed the current political environment surrounding Augusta Water District and Augusta Sanitary District and the City of Augusta's perceived intent to assume ownership of both of these utilities. It is feared that once Augusta Water falls that other Districts will follow suit. The MWUA may be looking into developing legislation that addresses the process by which ownership of a public water system (particularly community water systems) changes hands. This issue extends to the wastewater side, so Greg Cataldo will contact the folks at Maine Wastewater Control Association (www.mwwca.org) for their take on these issues.
- Gary discussed the governor's ATV task force. <http://www.state.me.us/ifw/aboutus/atvtaskforce.htm> Gary has attended a few of the meetings, but he was not permitted to speak for some reason. It looks like the new rules will support club-based ATV operation and landowner consultation. Clubs would then be enforcing their rules and bylaws on their members which should help reduce landowner complaints. No action is needed on this item by the PAC.

Public Awareness Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 28th, 2003

Page 3

- Southern Maine Children's Water Festival. Any idea when the date is? Organizers?
- Here are the press release assignments for the remainder of the year.
 - Press release for October meeting – Greg Cataldo

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 24th, 2003, Auburn Water District, 9:30 AM.

- Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.