

Mahnomen Community Water System – Project Planning Updates – April 2019

I would like to thank the Mahnomen residents and other concerned individuals who attended the community meeting held on March 7th, 2019. I would like to think there is a much better sense of understanding on how this project is moving, as well as what has been, and is proposing to be completed in order to maintain our project timeline. Thank you, as your input and comments provide perspective and insight!!

Moving forward, the FDL Water/Wastewater Department will continue to routinely monitor for the presence of contaminants in the Community Water System as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act. As part of our Disinfection By-Product (DBP) Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violation, the department will monitor on a quarterly basis (May, August, November 2019) and issue Public Notifications as required by the Public Notice Rule should the exceedance remain.

Please review these notifications, as they do provide recent water quality DBP figures, and small project updates, which is important in maintaining a project understanding and timeline.

Project Milestones

April-May 2019

The Department finalized a contract and issued a Notice To Proceed (NTP) with Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) as the project supplier to complete pilot well treatment studies on two (2) pilot wells. The studies are to commence the week of April 22nd, 2019, and should conclude early May. The department anticipates to have a full report with proposed treatment alternatives by the end of May, 2019. Both the department and SEH welcomes site visits to the pilot trailer for a brief tour and further discussion of this vital project component. Please contact the department directly to arrange.

The department received formal approval to commence with submitting funding applications to proposed project funders being USDA-Rural Development and Indian Community Development Block Grant programs. The department anticipates submitting funding applications to Indian Health Service (IHS), US EPA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and others as funding presents itself. The department, with support of the Reservation Business Committee, will fervently seek to diversify funding for this project.

June 2019

The department anticipates a draft Preliminary Engineering Report to be completed by Indian Health Service engineers, providing project alternatives, including, but not limited to, alternative analysis of source water (new wells), water treatment plant, storage tower, and distribution expansion, with estimated project costs, and selected alternative. Upon completion, funding applications to IHS and USEPA will be submitted via the Sanitation Deficiency System (SDS) List, with the Band prioritizing the Mahnomen Water Project as the top priority.

Topics of Discussion

As noted in my last article, the department understands frustration from community members on the pace of such a project and concerns of drinking water with disinfection by-product exceedances. A large topic of discussion at the community meeting was acute exposure versus chronic exposure. The Safe Drinking Water Act was enacted and authorizes the USEPA to administer the act in order to protect public health and safety. In doing so, USEPA and other organizations conduct various research on how to best set Maximum Contaminant Levels for various water quality contaminants which provides for public health and safety. As a department, we constantly weigh this benefit for community members. Research is informing us that consuming water with disinfection by-products exceedances for 70 years may pose an increased risk of cancer (1 in 1,000,000), a chronic exposure. Whereas, if the department operates the plant without chlorine, which is to provide a residual disinfectant into the distribution system, we could very likely expose the community to other viruses and bacteria which would be considered acute, and cause serious illness in a very short period of time. While neither situation is good, the department errs on the side of chronic exposure until the problem is resolved.

Another topic of discussion was about the Berkey water filters. The department provided these units as a way to ensure that consumers who sought ways to alleviate exposure were provided an opportunity to do so. The Berkey water filters do remove a fair amount of the DBPs, thus limiting exposure. Please note that maintenance is required in the form of backwashing the filters periodically. If you or someone you know, who resides in the community needs assistance with the backwashing, please contact the department and we can assist. The department continues to recommend to residents who have compromised immunity and/or are pregnant to seek medical advice on further limiting exposure to DBPs.

Lastly, the department will provide a link to both this newsletter and the March 7th Community Meeting presentation for your review. Please review, and contact me should you have questions.

The department anticipates the next community meeting to be held in August of 2019, so please continue to look for updates.

Thank you.

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