

Acton Water District

Water Words Notice

Winter 2005

Dear Customer:

There often seems to be confusion in defining exactly what the Water Supply District of Acton is. As a start, it might be beneficial to define what it isn't. The Water Supply District of Acton is not a town department. It does not use any of the revenue generated from your taxes to support its operations. It is not governed by the Board of Selectmen and town meeting, and its employees are not employees of the town.

It is a separate and distinct municipal entity that was created by an act of the Massachusetts Legislature in 1912. It is this enabling legislation that defines the Water Supply District of Acton and establishes how it will be governed. We work closely with all of the town departments, but we have a separate annual meeting where our voters establish our annual budget. A three-member Board of Water Commissioners is elected. They set policy, as well as establish water rates. It is the revenue generated from the sale of water that is used exclusively to fund the operations of the District. There are dozens of other examples of water districts. In our immediate area, Lunenburg, Sudbury, Shirley, Dedham/Westwood and Grafton are but a few examples. All these districts have similar, yet distinct, enabling legislation. Some have service areas limited to portions of individual communities, others cover multiple communities.

At the present time, 99.9 % of our service area is within the geographic confines of the Town of Acton. However, that is only because as of this point in time, that is what our ratepayers have indicated they wanted. There are a variety of methods at our disposal that would allow for expanding our service area to include portions of other communities. The existing political bounds that define the towns around us, including Acton, do not pose any limitation on what the District bounds could, or should be in the future.

There are many issues involved in expanding (or regionalizing) the District. In an effort to get answers to many of those questions the Board of Water Commissioners has reactivated the Land and Water Use Advisory Committee. This is a five-member committee of Acton residents with extraordinary yet diverse backgrounds. They will spend the next year researching the regionalization issue and their findings will appear in the year ending 2005 Annual Water District Report. The committee began their work this fall. To follow their progress, check the link to the Land and Water Use Committee meetings, posted on our website: www.actonh2o.com.

Sincerely,



James L. Deming
District Manager



Fall Flushing Completed

During most of October, the Water District flushed out water mains in sections of town where the pipes needed a cleansing. Although this often causes temporarily "dirty water" during the flushing, once the mains are flushed accumulated sediment is greatly reduced, and overall water quality improves. The next regular water main flushing will be in the early spring of 2005.

Lead and Copper Sampling Results

Every three years the Acton Water District collects samples from residents across town to determine the levels of lead and copper in our customer's drinking water. Lead and copper can enter drinking water when pipe metals and materials are dissolved by the water flowing through those pipes. This process is called corrosion. The main purpose of the lead and copper program is to ensure that customers are not being exposed to unhealthy levels of lead and copper, and to set "action levels" for water utilities' corrosion control practices. We completed this monitoring this past September, and are happy to report that all thirty samples fell below the action levels for both lead and copper. Thank you to those of you who participated in this monitoring program – your cooperation is much appreciated!



Intern Studies Well Protection



Megan Curtis-Murphy interned with the Acton Water District this past summer. She worked on a couple of projects during her internship but focused her efforts on a report analyzing the vulnerability of the Acton Water District wells to nearby roadway activity. Accidental hazardous spills, roadway deicing, typical highway maintenance and storm water runoff were the primary focus in her report. She researched the problems arising from these threats and made recommendations to the Acton Water District. Throughout the summer Megan worked with Water District personnel as well as various local and state officials to collect information and ideas for her research project.

Her second project helped educate Acton residents about how to maintain their septic systems to prevent groundwater contamination. Working with the Acton Board of Health, she sent out an educational brochure for residents living in the critical, protective radius around each wellfield (the Zone II). Megan has lived in Acton for twelve years, and is a graduate of the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. She is currently in her junior year at Tufts University studying Political Science with a focus on Environmental Studies.

Planning our Water Future: Acton's CWRMP

The Town of Acton is in the process of completing a Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Report (CWRMP/EIR). This Plan is intended to be a comprehensive look at the management of all water resources in Acton. A major component of the plan will examine the wastewater disposal needs and solutions for the entire town. With only a small portion of town covered by the Middle Fort Pond Sewer District, development creating more demand on our water resources, and many septic systems in need of major upgrades to meet Title Five specifications, this comprehensive look at water planning is timely. Wastewater disposal is not the only focus of the plan, it will also take into account other water resource issues such as: drinking water quantity and quality, stormwater management, surface and ground water quality, and the integration of all aspects of water resource management. Jane Ceraso, the Acton Water District's Environmental Manager, is a member of the CWRMP Citizen's Advisory Committee, which is working with Acton's Health Department and the project engineers, Woodard and Curran.

Phase One of the CWRMP has now been completed. It included identification of the greatest waste water "needs areas" in town and potential solutions for those areas. In addition to the existing sewer system, sites have been selected for the potential to treat and dispose of treated water. The plan will now investigate those sites and evaluate alternative collection and treatment technologies, and the feasibility of various solutions. It is expected that a public meeting will be scheduled in 2005 to discuss these potential solutions. For more information, contact Jane Ceraso, Acton Water District, at (978) 263-9107 or Brent Reagor, Acton Health Department, at (978) 264-9634.

Acton Garden Club/Acton Water District Water Wise Display Awarded Blue Ribbon and Educational Award

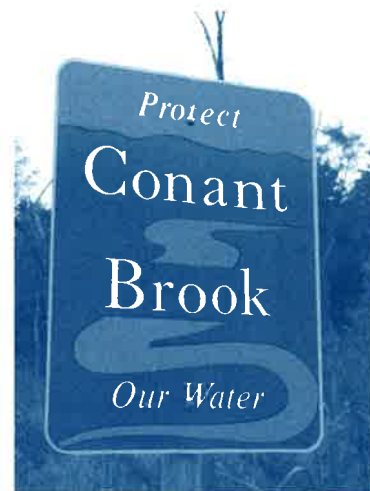
The Water Wise Gardening Committee, which consists of members of the Acton Garden Club and the Acton Water District, participated in the Acton Garden Flower Show "Garden Inspirations" with an educational exhibit on water wise gardening. The display featured tools and techniques to save water in the landscape. Informational brochures were available for the public to learn about soil, drought tolerant plants, and water saving techniques. The exhibit displayed colorful photographs as well as an arrangement with water wise plants. The display was awarded first place of all the impressive educational exhibits, as well as the overall Educational Award. Congratulations to the Water Wise Gardening Committee for their excellent work!



Stream Signs

Have you noticed the new green and blue signs identifying local streams around town? These signs mark the culmination of the "Acton Stream Awareness Project". The goal of this project is to raise awareness about Acton's network of streams, and to promote the protection of Acton's water. The project has resulted in the installation of stream signs at 13 locations where local roads cross Acton streams. These locations are along well-traveled roads, close to community resources, such as Acton's public water supply wells, and close to community destinations. In addition to the stream name the signs include the stewardship message: "Protect Our Water".

A brochure featuring a map of Acton's streams, streets, and the sign locations, has been produced and is available at the Acton Water District building at 693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton Town Hall, the Acton Memorial Library, and online at www.actonstreams.org. Tom Tidman, Acton's Natural Resources Director, created the original artwork for the brochure. The Acton Water District is one of the project supporters.



TURI Awards Grant to Acton and Partners

The Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) at the University of Massachusetts Lowell has granted the Acton Water District and five other surrounding towns a grant for a multi-town pesticide awareness project. The Toxics Use Reduction Networking Grant provides seed money for communities to identify their toxics of concern and examine alternative practices and products that reduce environmental or public health impacts. The overall purpose is to foster water resource protection through pesticide and human health awareness. Partners in the project are primarily water department staff from the surrounding towns of Westford, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, and Littleton.

The kickoff for the project will occur this upcoming spring, when the Butterbrook Farm and the Bird House Garden Center, in conjunction with the Acton Water District, will host free workshops for local residents on organic lawn alternatives. Early next spring information on these upcoming workshops will be posted in the local paper. We hope you will participate.

Stains on your Laundry?

Most New England groundwater contains iron and manganese, dissolved from the sands and gravels that comprise the aquifer. Acton's groundwater is no exception. Certain wells in Acton contain higher concentrations of iron and manganese, and the concentrations in individual wells will also fluctuate over time. Because of this, some customers may experience intermittent staining of white plumbing fixtures, the inside of dishwashers, and light colored laundry - giving new meaning to the term "red socks".

The Acton Water District treats the water with an agent to sequester the iron and manganese to minimize this problem, but high water temperatures (above 140 degrees F) and oxidizing agents can render the sequestering agent ineffective.

For customers who experience staining, the following actions should help to minimize the problem:

- ◆ Ensure that your hot water heater is set below 140°F.
- ◆ Wash laundry in cool or lukewarm water.
- ◆ Turn off any "temperature boost" features on your washing machine.
- ◆ Avoid the use of bleach or oxidizing detergents.
- ◆ Maintain your hot water tank as directed, most need regular flushing.



What was it?

The mystery photo included in the Summer 2004 Water Words Notice was of the pervious pavement installed at the Acton Science Discovery Museum, as part of a low impact development (LID) demonstration project. Pervious pavement may be utilized in areas where the objective is to minimize water runoff from paved surfaces while maximizing the recharge of underlying groundwater. The Puff family, Trudy Walther, Jack Killian, Gail Blizard, Bryon Beilman, Jeanne Kingman, Nancy and Allen Warner, Jim Press, and Debbie Simon all correctly identified the "mystery photo".



Acton Water District



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Water Words Notice is published twice a year for all customers of the Acton Water District

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Prsrt Std
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #134
Acton, MA



What is it?

Please email your answers to webgeek@actonh2o.com. Winners (and the correct answer) will be posted in the next Water Words Notice