

4 Public Education/Involvement

4.1 Introduction

Working under the conviction that *an informed public contributes to the solution of contaminant problems*, the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB) decided that public involvement, participation, and education was the best means to ensure that their management plan, when complete, would be implemented. Early and continuous public involvement would inform residents of the potential contamination problems, give them alternatives to consider, and eventually supply a consensus for solutions. Establishing a partnership with the community would create joint ownership and responsibility for the wellhead protection project's implementation.

The main focus of the public education task was to engage and maintain public support, minimize community opposition, establish a working relationship with the media, and through public support, improve political support for the program. In order to achieve these goals, the SAJB elected to complete the following tasks:

- Establish the SAJB's identity.
- Publish newsletters under the SAJB logo.
- Develop and present a public education presentation.
- Engage and maintain the media interest.
- Improve political relationships, and provide lawmakers with information about the program.
- Fully utilize opportunities, such as large public gatherings, to inform the public about the program.
- Plan and present at least two community information meetings.

In addition to these tasks the SAJB developed a public information video and a web site to insure that information about the program could be made available to a large number citizens.

4.1.1 Public Education and Program Unity

At the onset of their program the SAJB elected to involve the public in their wellhead protection program. During 1997, they published newsletters, issued press releases, gave media interviews, participated in environmental forms, and public meeting, and presented an informational aquifer program to numerous local groups.

In 1998, the City of Spokane, having completed the technical assessment portion of its wellhead program, elected to work with the SAJB to complete both programs. After signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the SAJB, the two programs were merged and the remaining tasks completed jointly. The MOU enabled each

entity's representatives to work towards compatible decisions about the process and to present a unified program to the people of Spokane. In 1999, the City of Spokane joined the SAJB.

4.2 Developing an Identity

The initial goal of the SAJB was to establish its identity. The purveyors who made up the SAJB had long been established in the area. Using their individual identities during public meetings or on informational materials, could prove to be cumbersome, add confusion to public presentations, media and educational materials, and group recognition.

Members chose the name "Spokane Aquifer Joint Board." In September of 1996, the Board adopted a logo and the slogan, "Local Water Utilities United for Safe Drinking Water." At this time, a magnet the size of a business card, was created. The magnet shows the SAJB logo, slogan, the words "Spokane Aquifer Joint Board," and a Spokane post office box number address. The magnet is used as a "give-a-way" at public presentations and gatherings.

The new logo, address, and slogan, appear on the SAJB's informational materials and stationary, along with the names of the seventeen original board members. A sample of both the stationary and the magnets are in Appendix K of this report.

4.3 Public Presentations

In August of 1996, letters were sent to the areas' community groups announcing the availability of a "free of charge" presentation about wellhead protection and the Spokane Aquifer. Many groups responded to this invitation, and scheduled the wellhead presentation during their regular meeting times. The presentation was well received, and "word of mouth" produced interest, causing other groups to call and schedule the same presentation. A copy of the presentation slides and a list of groups who viewed the show from September 1996 to March 1997 are in Appendix M.

After each presentation, a question and answer session was held. When available, extra copies of the latest newsletter, magnets, and a "Citizen's Involvement Group – Membership Form" (see Figure 4-1) were distributed to attendees. People were encouraged to mail the form to the SAJB's post office address. Individuals expressing interest by returning the membership form were added to the newsletter publication list, and to the citizen's involvement group/focus group list. Those individuals were contacted during the management planning task of the project, and given the opportunity to serve in a citizen's involvement group and/or focus group.

Figure 4-1: Citizen's Involvement Group - Membership Form

Citizen's Involvement Group

Membership Form

Spokane Aquifer Wellhead Protection Program

Yes, I want to help protect our drinking water.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PLACE OF BUSINESS _____

HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

Spokane Aquifer Joint Board

"Local Water Utilities United for Safe Drinking Water"

P.O. Box 142055 Spokane, WA 99214-2055

4.3.1 Post Office Box

With the publication of the SAJB's first newsletter in February of 1997, the SAJB set up a post office box address for persons that wished to inquire about the group or about wellhead protection. Vera Water & Power volunteered to collect and forward the mail received through this address. The SAJB's September newsletter solicited citizen participation, asking interested parties to return a form to the post office box.

Since the post office box was already established, it was decided that the contaminant source inventory letters of notification (Chapter 6) should use this as a return address, and that it could further be used to receive citizens' applications to participate in the public process. The SAJB post office address is:

P.O. Box 142055, Spokane, WA 99214.

4.4 Newsletters

Although initial interest from the media was strong, the SAJB felt that it needed to maintain the interest expressed from public presentations, meetings with elected officials, and business leaders. The SAJB elected to publish a quarterly newsletter.

The first newsletter was published in February of 1997. The publication focused on the SAJB's members and goals, the reality of contamination, and one of the scientific processes used during the data collection phase of the wellhead protection program. The second newsletter was released in May of 1997 and included a drawing of the aquifer and the newly delineated SAJB wellhead protection areas, a section on disposal of waste contaminants, aquifer trivia, and an article on the purpose and goals of wellhead protection. The third newsletter was published in September of 1997. It focused on the contaminant source inventory phase of the program, and on getting residents involved in the citizens groups. It included a mail-in form for citizens to receive information and to join the program.

Newsletters were mailed to a distribution list of interested parties, libraries, businesses, and elected officials. Each SAJB member received a pre-determined number of newsletters to distribute within their districts. Copies of each newsletter and the distribution list appear in Appendix L.

4.5 Media

Early in the project, a strategy was planned to gain the interest of the press, and to retain that interest during the entire project. As a part of this plan, news releases and press packages were prepared, and media briefings and media interviews were scheduled. Some of the articles written about wellhead protection were:

- “Keeping Contamination at Bay” – Spokesman Review – City of Spokane
- “Aquifer Board faces tough fight for clean water” – Spokesman Review – City of Spokane
- “Aquifer alliance” – Inland Northwest News
- “As rivers range along, so does Spokane Aquifer” – Spokesman Review – City of Spokane
- “Spokane’s Aquifer: We are what we drink” – Palouse Journal
- “Board here is taking steps to protect pure water” – Journal of Business
- “Scientists peer deep into earth beneath Valley” – Spokesman Review – City of Spokane
- “Utilities unite to protect drinking water” – Spokesman Review – City of Spokane

All magazine and newspaper articles are public records and can be reviewed in any local public library.

4.5.1 News Releases

In September of 1996, two news releases were distributed to local and national media. Printed copies of the releases were sent to local papers, the Spokane Valley News, The Cheney Free Press, The Tribune (Deer Park), and the Spokesman-Review. The same releases were sent to the Associated Press’s Washington Bureau. Local television stations (KXLY, KREM, and KHQ), and KPBX radio also received the press releases.

The first release, “Water Utilities Unite to Protect Spokane’s Drinking Water”, introduced the SAJB and its goals, and second release “Superman Eyes” described one of the scientific techniques used to investigate the aquifer. The second release sparked an interest in the seismic investigation and monitoring well drilling activities taking place in the valley at the time. Several television stations requested that a crew be allowed to photograph these activities. Permission was granted and several stations showed the activities during their prime time newscasts.

The third release was issued on March 30th, 1997 to sixteen radio, TV and newspapers outlining the letters of notification that were mailed on March 23, 1997. A copy of the news releases and a listing of the media who received them appear in Appendix R.

4.5.2 Media Briefings

Media briefings were prearranged with special interest and/or scientific reporters. These briefings lasted about an hour each and were intended to give the media a broad background on the SAJB and its goals. A press package, containing all news releases, a background information memo about the SAJB, wellhead protection, any current newspaper articles, and “answers to frequently asked questions” sheet was given to each reporter. Several newspaper articles appeared in local papers as the result of these briefings and appearances. A copy of the materials included in the press package appears in Appendix N of this report.

4.6 Expo '97 and the 1997 Spokane County Fair

SAJB members elected to exhibit at the 1997 8th Annual Environmental Form (Expo '97). A presentation booth was designed, and included with a working aquifer model simulation of a pump station and reservoir loaned to the SAJB by Vera Water and Power. SAJB members staffed the exhibit during show hours and distributed SAJB newsletters and magnets, aquifer information supplied by the Spokane County Water Quality Management Program, and recycling information supplied by Ecology and Spokane County Waste.

A member of the SAJB distributed information at the 1997 Spokane County Fair. The members shared a booth with the City of Spokane, and distributed SAJB newsletters and magnets, aquifer information supplied by the Spokane County Water Quality Management Program, and recycling information supplied by Ecology and Spokane County Waste.

4.7 Political Meetings

Several private meetings were held with elected officials such as, Ms. Kate McCaslin, a Spokane County Commissioner. But whenever possible, wellhead protection/aquifer presentations were presented to groups such as the Spokane County Planning Commissioners and the City of Millwood's City Council. Politically active groups, such as the Senior Legislative Coalition (SLC), were also a prime focus. Letters and comments from these groups indicate that the presentations were successful. The SLC's written comment about the presentation was “Your slide presentation was very informative and gave us (members) a good look at the Spokane area in relation to our water system. We now realize how sensitive it is and how we all need to protect it from pollution.”

4.8 Video

Funding was obtained in January of 1998 for a twelve-minute video. This video contained the same elements as the public presentation that was developed early in the program. A script was composed and approved by the City of Spokane, the County Water Quality Management Program, and the SAJB.

After conceptualization of the video's theme and preparation of the script, a professional local film company was sub-contracted to produce the video. SAJB members were asked to volunteer for speaking parts. Bob Ashcraft of Consolidated Irrigation District #19 was chosen as the narrator. Mr. Ashcraft introduced and closed the program, in addition to narrating the aquifer formation segment, and explaining the potential threat of

contamination posed by individuals and businesses to the aquifer. Ty Wick, of Spokane County Water District #3, demonstrated the problems and costs associated with actual and potential contamination events. Jim Lahde, of Model Irrigation District #18, explained where the aquifer was located and the role it plays in development of the area. Kathy Small, of MOAB Irrigation District, introduced the individual members of the SAJB, and illustrated the need for government, businesses, and individuals to work together for the successful completion of this program. Brad Blegen, of the City of Spokane, defined potential wellhead protection areas, their purpose, importance, and direction of flow.

The video is intended for general audiences, aged ten to adult. Information is presented using a non-scientific format. Deliberate attempts were made to keep graphic representations and verbal communication clear, concise, comprehensible, and interesting.

Two versions of the video were filmed. The first version invited persons viewing the video to volunteer for focus groups that were being formed during the management planning portion of the program. A small number of recordings of this version were produced, along with a special television master used by the City of Spokane's information channel. Initially, the City showed the video frequently, and with elimination of the "focus group invitation" intends to make it part of its regular programming into the future.

The second or "final" version eliminated the "focus group invitation". This "final" version is intended for use as a public education tool for businesses, schools, libraries, and/or individuals that request information about Spokane's aquifer and/or its water supply.

The video was initially used by the SAJB during the public and focus group meetings. It was also made available to interested parties via SAJB members. Seventy-five recordings were given to a local marketing agency that was preparing a seventh grade area school program for 1999.

4.9 Meeting in a Bag

Once the video was completed, each member of the SAJB received a "Meeting in a Bag". The "Bag" contained the a copy of the SAJB's video, SAJB magnets, materials explaining wellhead protection, drinking water supplies, alternative products, and recycling. These materials were supplied by EPA, Ecology, and Spokane Solid Waste at no charge. The purpose of the "Bag" was to give each water district the materials they needed for a presentation about the Spokane Aquifer and the wellhead protection program. Most water district operators/managers made their first presentations to their own Board of Directors. Additionally, presentations were made at local schools, safety meetings, and local businesses.

4.10 Other Public Involvement Activities

The Spokane Aquifer Tour was a self guided tour of drinking water points of interest around the Spokane Valley - Rathrdum Prairie held in September of 1998. The SAJB and Spokane County sponsored the event. It featured speakers at each of the points of interest.

In addition to this event, purveyors, such as Modern Electric, Vera Water & Power, and Model Irrigation have added articles on wellhead protection to their regularly published

newsletters and billing inserts. Some districts also hold special activities for school children about water quality and preservation.

Not all SAJB members serve residences. Members such as the Spokane Industrial Park elected to distribute information about water quality and recycling to businesses in the Park, and are making the same materials available to any new tenants.

4.11 Web Site

In April of 1998, a web site was developed for the City of Spokane and the SAJB. The site lists facts about the wellhead program, why it is important to the Spokane area, information about the Board, community meetings, local water purveyors, wellhead protection video, events calendar, and originally a sign-up sheet for citizens who wished to join the focus groups. Once the Citizens Wellhead Committee was formed, meeting dates and times were posted on the site along with the minutes of past meetings. Related web sites were also included.

4.12 Survey

A public survey was developed and implemented by KXLY Research Surveys. Complete details of this survey and its results appear in the management planning chapter of this report.