

WDMWW Prepares for Ongoing Drought Issues in 2013

“Where does water come from?” This oft-asked question from grammar school students gains even more currency with the challenges of a drought. While the year 2012 is in the rear-view mirror, the drought is not, and without significant precipitation in the form of snow and rain, it could continue well into 2013.

“We’re not sounding alarm bells because the truth is that we have sufficient water to serve the needs of our customers in West Des Moines,” said **Bill Garrett**, acting general manager of West Des Moines Water Works. “In an average year, 70 percent of the water that we treat and provide to our customers comes from a combination of deep and shallow wells, which are less susceptible to droughts and floods.”

‘GOOD TO HAVE’

The deep wells owned by West Des Moines Water Works are at least 2,500 feet in depth and contain water estimated to be at least 10,000 years old. During the past summer, Water Works placed

one of its three deep wells on reserve. This measure served to reduce stress on that individual well and allowed staff to prepare for potential ongoing precipitation shortages in 2013.



West Des Moines produces water from a combination of shallow and deep wells. Pictured above is a well house.

“These are good wells to have,” noted **Mike Gannon**, a hydrologist with Iowa DNR. “They generally have less variability than surface water ... and the drought impact is indirect.”

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Water Rates Will Stay the Same in 2013; WDMWW Continues Upgrades to Water Main System

The Board of Trustees of West Des Moines Water Works announced that water rates will remain the same in 2013 at \$4.45 per thousand gallons. Residential water customers will see their basic service charge increase by a penny a day, to \$3.60 a month.

“It’s no secret that the prolonged drought in 2012 made for one of the toughest years in recent history for water utilities,” said **Bill Garrett**, acting general manager. “One of our priorities as we planned for 2013 was to keep rates steady while ensuring a sufficient water supply to meet demand under even the most difficult circumstances.”

COMMITTED TO WATER SYSTEM INTEGRITY

The Board of Trustees remains committed to the long-term strategy of upgrading the water system with preventative measures, including the replacement of old cast-iron water mains.

The two areas selected to receive new mains later this year are: 18th Street between Center Street

Place and Buffalo Road and South 16th Street, south of Fuller Road.

Many of the older unlined cast-iron mains are selected for replacement because they are prone to breakage and can cause rusty water. Others are upgraded to better serve neighborhoods and reinforce fire protection capacity.

PLANNING RATHER THAN REACTING

“Our board has long taken the approach to steadily upgrade infrastructure, such as water mains and wells, rather than waiting for a crisis situation to develop,” Garrett explained. “Eventually, all unlined cast-iron mains will be replaced.”

Over the past three decades, WDMWW has replaced nearly 25 miles of old mains. The identification of problem mains for replacement relies in great measure on reports from water customers. Please contact WDMWW customer service at **515-222-3460** if you suddenly notice rusty water or water bubbling up in the street.

DID YOU KNOW



West Des Moines Water Works

customers own 22 wells; a water treatment plant

with softening and iron removal;

5 water towers;

4 water storage reservoirs;

6 booster stations;

more than

210 miles of

water mains and a

business office.

Source: West Des Moines Water Works

WDM Wells Prepared for Heavier Use in Spring and Summer

"Drought" continued from page 1

Gannon recently wrapped up a study of groundwater availability under drought conditions, looking specifically at the Raccoon River, which supplies water to Des Moines Water Works.

On average WDMWW purchases 30 percent of its water from Des Moines Water Works, which relies primarily on surface water from the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers. In response to low river levels and stream flows in July 2012, DMWW and WDMWW instituted a voluntary conservation program. Customers complied and both utilities avoided implementing water use restrictions.

SUSTAINED LOW FLOW IN RIVERS

Among other distinctions, 2012 marked one of the longest stretches of "low stream flows" in the past 30 years. Gannon explained that "low" is a regulatory term, which at the Van Meter gauge on the Raccoon River is any flow measurement of less than 190 cubic feet per second (CFS). In 2012, the lowest flow of 94 CFS occurred on October 6, which is considerably higher than the 30-year low of 65 CFS on December 11, 2000.

"The low flow designation allows the DNR to take precautions as necessary, such as limiting irrigation," Gannon said. "If the [Raccoon River's] stream flow would drop to 43.4 CFS (at the Van Meter gauge), we would see significant impact to the water supply downstream."

In a drought year, river and shallow ground water sources do not replenish as quickly or as effectively because hot, dry temperatures spike consumption



The Raccoon River experienced prolonged low water levels and stream flow during 2012 as a result of the drought.

while the lack of precipitation decreases supply. This lack of recharge directly impacts rivers, radial collector wells and alluvial aquifers, all of which are used in the provision of water in Central Iowa.

MULTIPLE, DIVERSE WATER SOURCES

"We are fortunate in West Des Moines to have access to diverse and multiple types of productive water sources, so we don't just rely on surface water," noted Mitch Pinkerton, WDMWW water production manager. "In the summer and fall of 2012, we prepared for continuing dry weather. Our wells are cleaned and ready to go. Like everyone else, we're hoping for more rain in 2013."

Gretchen Tegeler Named to Water Works Board of Trustees

Gretchen Tegeler has been appointed to the WDMWW Board of Trustees by West Des Moines Mayor Steve Gaer. She replaces

Gwen Swanger, who served on the board from August 2010 to December 31, 2012.

Tegeler, executive director of the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa, is respected in business and government circles for her finance and management expertise. She spent eight years as director of the Iowa Department of Management and a year as chief of staff for Gov. Terry Branstad. After leaving



Gretchen Tegeler

state government, Tegeler worked as state vice president for the American Cancer Society. She has served on the board of EMC Insurance Group since 2006.

"I look forward to being involved in such a crucial aspect of our community's quality of life," Tegeler said. "Water quality and availability will always be top priorities, but I am also interested in maximizing efficiency and keeping rates affordable for residential and business users. I am open to looking at all options for achieving these important goals."

Her term expires December 31, 2018.

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