



BENNER TOWNSHIP WATER AUTHORITY

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The Benner Township Water Authority's (BTWA) appeal of Bellefonte Borough Authority's (BBA) application to spread bio-solids from their wastewater treatment plant within our Grove Park aquifer recharge area was denied.

The BTWA was first made aware of BBA's intent to spread bio-solids by a review of the public notice as well as a local lawsuit filed by a resident of Benner Township. Neither the BBA nor the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) made any attempt to notify the BTWA of this intended exercise.

At the time, the BTWA was developing a source water protection (SWP) plan (which since has been approved by the DEP) that identified the proposed application site to be an area of concern due to its location within the aquifer recharge area of the Grove Park well. Due to the ongoing concerns of the potentially harmful contaminants and emerging contaminants found in municipal bio-solids, the BTWA felt obligated to act to protect that water supply.

The Grove Park well has already been affected by surface activity as evidenced by a recorded nitrate level as high as 8.80 parts per million (ppm). The current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/PA DEP maximum contaminant level for this pollutant is 10 ppm.

We are concerned with bio-solids because everything that is flushed into the public sanitary sewer system ends up in the treated bio-solids. This not only includes industrial wastes, but contains items ("emerging contaminants") that may be flushed into the system illegally which are not monitored by the current regulations. The BTWA has significant concern due to the impact previous surface activity has already had on the groundwater in this area.

We attempted to mediate and discuss our concerns with the leaders of the BBA and the DEP initially following our notice of appeal. We encouraged the BBA to consider applying their treatment plant waste upon the State Correctional Institution at Rockview's property, far removed from any public or private water sources. Initially we thought there was a consensus to seek utilizing the Rockview property; however, the BBA, after further consideration, changed their position based on the amount of property needed for their use and how it would ultimately be obtained. At the time our Authority was at a point that we either walk away from challenging the permit or continue with the appeal process through the Environmental Hearing Board (EHB). The BTWA decided to appeal believing that we had a strong case and would prevail.

In preparing our case we believed there was enough evidence that the permit to apply this waste did not accurately describe the soils type. It was also our expert's opinion that what is applied on this land will end up in our Grove Park well.

Ultimately, it was too large a task to disprove a permit issued by the DEP and we were unsuccessful in our appeal.

The EHB discounted many of our arguments and concerns because the Commonwealth classifies bio-solids the same as agricultural manure and we were unable to prove what may or is even likely to occur as it has in the past with nitrogen applications. The EHB did however recognize that nitrogen in our aquifer is a concern and commended our Authority's efforts to protect our water supply.

The BTWA believes that any further appeal would be useless based upon the wording of the opinion. The EHB did acknowledge our concern and encouraged a monitoring of the bio-solids applications for regulatory compliance.

The BTWA will continue to move forward in protecting the Township's potable water supply. We are currently engaged in a process to provide a source of water outside of the present area of contamination influence to greatly reduce the nitrates in the Grove Park water supply. We will also be exploring the interconnection of the existing systems to provide backup water sources for the different areas in the Township in the event of a major outage or contamination.

The BTWA will continue to monitor and provide the highest quality water to our customers at the lowest possible cost. We will continue to work diligently to maintain our low rates for our customers.

We want to thank you for your continued support and the support we have experienced from our customers throughout this lengthy process.

Benner Township Water Authority Board Members