

Spokane Aquifer News

THE DAY THE WATER STOPPED IN SPOKANE COUNTY

IT WAS A ROUTINE WATER TEST. Just like the ones regularly performed at each of the 12 wellsites operated by Spokane County Water District #3. A test to make sure the water flowing to customers was clean and pure.

But on that morning in 1990, results of the test were anything but routine. The activity and consequences they sparked would stretch out over the next six years, present new challenges for Water District #3 and affect the lives of thousands of local citizens.

Water samples showed that a toxic chemical, Carbon Tetrachloride, was present in the well water piped to nearly 5,000 people in and around the community of Mead, northwest of Spokane. Contamination was gauged at levels just over the limit set by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency. The well was closed immediately. When traces of the same contaminant were found in the water of a second nearby Water District #3 well, it also was taken off line.

The community of Mead and surrounding areas were left with two uncontaminated wells to serve the needs that four had been meeting. That meant month after month of stringent water use restrictions for local residents and business users. It also meant a costly, exacting, time-consuming process for the Water District of identifying sites, drilling for a new well and connecting it to the water system.

Nearly six years and \$750,000 later, the new well of Water District #3 was finally pumping clean water to local customers. Area users were saved from extreme water shortages because the two

remaining wells were operable and pure. And most important, no one became ill from contamination.

But Ty Wick won't forget the trials and tribulation caused when the water in one of his wells tested positive for a potential cancer-causing contaminant. Today he serves as president of the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB) to help protect water quality in Water District #3, in the 16 other Water Districts in North Spokane and the Valley, and for the more than 110,000 people they serve.



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THE SAJB MEMBER DISTRICTS *Members the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board are:*

Carnhope Irrigation District #7
Consolidated Irrigation District #19
East Spokane Water District #1
Hutchinson Irrigation District #16
Irvin Water District #6
Liberty Lake Sewer District #1
Millwood Municipal Water Supply
Moab Irrigation District #20
Model Irrigation District #18
Modern Electric Water Company
Orchard Avenue Irrigation District #8
North Spokane Irrigation District #8
Pasadena Park Irrigation District #17
Spokane County Water District #3
Trentwood Irrigation District #3
Vera Water and Power
Whitworth Water District #2

*The SAJB meets the third Thursday of
each month in the offices of Vera
Water and Power, located at 601 N.
Evergreen in the Spokane Valley.
Visitors are welcome.*

For More Information

*If you would like to receive more
information about the Spokane Aquifer
Joint Board and its wellhead protection
activities, or to learn about our Citizens
Input Group, please send your name and
address to:*

*Citizens Input Group
P.O. Box 142055
Spokane, WA 99214-2055*

DEAR READER,

WE'RE THE SPOKANE AQUIFER JOINT BOARD (SAJB). And while you may not know much about us yet, we know a bit about you.

We know that when you turn on the faucet in your home or place of business, the clean water that flows is supplied by us. We are the 17 Water Utilities who serve you and more than 110,000 others who live in North Spokane and the Valley.

Today we're all members of the SAJB, an organization committed to providing clean water for our communities by preserving the underground aquifer from which it comes, and by protecting the wells that deliver water to our homes and businesses.

Continued on back.



SAJB SPOKANE AQUIFER JOINT BOARD

Local Water Utilities United for Safe Drinking Water

P.O. Box 142055 • Spokane, WA 99214 • (509) 536-0121 • Ty Wick, President

DEAR READER (CONTINUED FROM FRONT)

Because we believe citizens like you share our commitment, we'd like you to know about some of the initiatives we're undertaking to help keep our water clean. This is the first edition of our bi-monthly newsletter. Subsequent issues will report on the SAJB's progress and provide a resource to tap when you want to know:

- *How we can track the flow of water in our aquifer and keep contaminants from reaching your faucet.*
- *What new rules and regulations may be necessary to protect our wells from groundwater contamination.*
- *How potential above-ground sources of contamination in each District are identified and ranked according to their potential danger to our water supply.*
- *What contingency plans exist and are needed to insure a continuing supply of water should a major contamination event occur.*
- *How new technologies are making the protection of our water supply easier and more cost effective.*
- *How you can participate in a citizens input group and get involved in activities to keep our water supply clean for today and tomorrow.*

Here in the Inland Northwest it's easy to take our abundant natural resources for granted. Clean water? Anything less from our faucets would be unthinkable. But not impossible.

That's the reason those of us who supply water to you and your neighbors have pooled our efforts and our resources to help head off problems before they require costly cleanup and repair efforts. Before we pass on the unthinkable legacy of a contaminated water supply to our children and grandchildren.

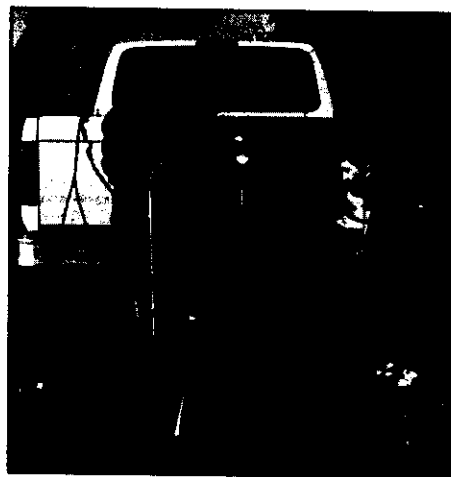
Now that you know who we are, and what we hope to accomplish, we invite you to support our efforts. Help us protect and preserve our clean water supply and the quality of life we value so highly in this region.

SPOKANE AQUIFER JOINT BOARD
Local Water Utilities United for Safe Drinking Water

SAJB USES "SUPERMAN EYES" TO CHART THE SPOKANE AQUIFER

TODAY THE SPOKANE AQUIFER JOINT BOARD (SAJB) IS USING A NEW TECHNOLOGY to gauge the scope and course of the underground aquifer that provides water to more than 110,000 residents in the Valley and North Spokane.

A device dubbed "Superman eyes" by CH2M Hill engineers who advise the SAJB in this data collection process, sends sound waves into the ground at regular intervals. When they bounce back to the



CH2M Hill engineers monitor "Superman eyes" data collection activities in the Spokane Valley.

surface, the waves yield an accurate map of the physical characteristics of the aquifer. That information helps the experts determine the direction and speed of water flow, which could be critical in predicting the course of potential contaminants in our water supply and preventing them from reaching local community faucets.

"Superman eyes" testing is just one of the ways the SAJB is helping to manage our regional aquifer and keep Spokane's water clean.

Spokane AQUIFER News

WHY WELLHEAD PROTECTION IN SPOKANE?

MANY SPOKANE RESIDENTS MAY NOT KNOW WHAT A WELLHEAD PROTECTION PROGRAM IS, or what it is supposed to accomplish. But if you ask the people of Woburn, MA, they will relate the *lack* of a wellhead protection program to the chemical contamination of two public drinking water wells. This public health crisis resulted in loss of life, personal suffering, and ended in costly litigation.

Citizens of Spokane have a unique opportunity to prevent drinking water contamination. Spokane's water is clean, and in order to keep it that way local water utilities have formed the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB). The SAJB does not want to wait until contaminated water causes illness, so they have set as their first and primary goal the creation of a proactive wellhead protection program.

The SAJB's wellhead protection program is well underway. Scientific data about the aquifer and SAJB members' wells has been collected, and the areas surrounding those wells that should be protected have been identified. At present, information regarding above-ground activities that are potential sources of contamination is being assembled. When these sources are identified, SAJB members will work with the community and determine a course of action to reduce the risk of contamination events.

In order to create a broad-based community supported program offering long-term solutions, the SAJB needs public input. This is why the Joint Board is making presentations to area civic and business leaders. The presentations boost awareness of aquifer protection as a key public policy issue and encourage individual responsibility. Activities such as these presentations heighten public awareness and prompt residents to sign up for the Citizens Input Group. This group will be made up of citizens volunteering to participate in the wellhead protection public process.

Beginning in early summer, the Citizens Input Group will review current regulations to begin determining the level of risk to the water supply they are willing to accept. Working with city and county staffs, recommendations will be formulated and presented to the Spokane City Council, Millwood City Council, and the Spokane Board of County Commissioners. These governing bodies have the authority to implement rules and regulations for a proactive wellhead protection program.

The SAJB, along with numerous community partners, is taking timely, proactive steps to insure the quality of our drinking water supply. With public support, the SAJB will find balanced solutions to this critical public issue and hopefully prevent contamination problems before they occur and result in negative impacts to the public's health.

THE SAJB

MEMBER DISTRICTS

Members of the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board are:

Carnhope Irrigation District #7
Consolidated Irrigation District #19
East Spokane Water District #1
Hutchinson Irrigation District #16
Irwin Water District #6
Kaiser Aluminum Trexwood
Liberty Lake Sower District #1
City of Millwood
Mosby Irrigation District #20
Modell Irrigation District #18
Modena Electric Water Company
Orchard Avenue Irrigation District #8
North Spokane Irrigation District #8
Paradise Park Irrigation District #17
Spokane County Water District #3
Trentwood Irrigation District #1
Vera Water and Power
Whatworth Water District #2

The SAJB meets the third Thursday of each month in the offices of Vera Water and Power, located at 601 N. Evergreen in the Spokane Valley. Visitors are welcome.

For More Information

If you would like to receive more information about the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board and its wellhead protection activities, or to learn about our Citizens Input Group, please send your name and address to:

Citizens Input Group
P.O. Box 142055
Spokane, WA 99214-2055
or call (509) 744-3350

AQUIFER TRIVIA

Q: How many gallons of drinking water will be contaminated if one quart of oil is spilled in the aquifer?

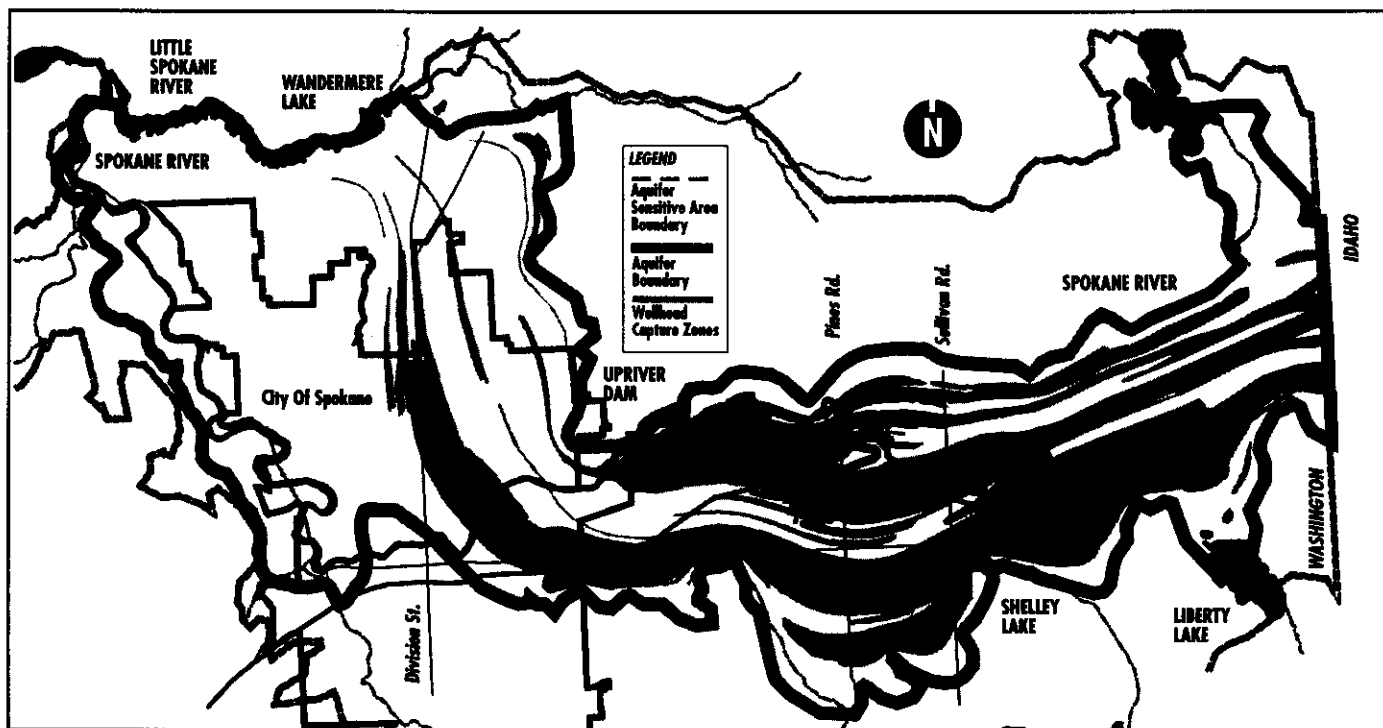
A: 250,000 gallons of water.



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The map on this page outlines the Spokane aquifer. The light gray "worm-like" streams are wellhead capture zones. These streams represent the areas from where local purveyors pump your drinking water.

See if you can locate where you live and/or work. There is a very good chance that some of your everyday activities occur directly over the aquifer. So, remember to take care while you are "walking" on your drinking water.

DEAR READER,

In March, Kaiser Aluminum's Trentwood Plant, a water purveyor to more than 1,500 employees, joined the SAJB. With the addition of Kaiser, the Board now includes 18 local water purveyors, giving it more diversity and credibility than ever in its commitment to protecting Spokane's drinking water.

Additionally, the City of Spokane, Spokane County and the SAJB have signed interlocal agreements. These agreements allow the organizations to share data in developing the region's wellhead protection program.

New partners, Kaiser Aluminum and the City of Spokane, will work with the SAJB's original 17 water utilities to insure that clean water is delivered to Spokane's citizens.

Recycling and Proper Waste Disposal Prevent Aquifer Contamination

*For more information and free
literature on recycling, please call:*

Department of Ecology
1 800-RECYCLE

Environmental Protection Agency
1 800-424-4372

Spokane County
Water Quality Management
(509) 456-6024

Spokane County
Solid Waste Management
(509) 625-7895

Spokane Regional
Solid Waste Disposal System
(509) 456-6024

Spokane AQUIFER News

HELP PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER, JOIN OUR CITIZENS INPUT GROUP

WHY SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED?

When the Pittsburgh Paint factory erupted in flames, a large crowd, including numerous firefighters, simply stood and watched as the building burned to the ground.

Several years earlier, the community had set a groundwater protection policy. A new paint factory would provide jobs and economic vitality, but could also be a potential source of drinking water contamination. So the citizens group decided that if a fire ever occurred, the factory would be allowed to burn, rather than pour thousands of gallons of water on the fire that would flush contaminants into their drinking water.

Spokane residents will soon be asked to come up with and evaluate similar solutions to similar problems. As locals, we take pride in our region's quality of life, but we also understand that business and development are a part of our growth, and without them, we would have a weak economy. Balanced decisions, which consider all aspects of protection and growth are only arrived at when all points of view are considered.

The Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB) is soliciting citizen participation through community meetings and educational presentations. The SAJB has given presentations to environmentalists, developers, activists, businesses and many other groups over the past six months. Members of these groups have been invited to join our Citizens' Input Group. Along with these concerned citizens, you are invited to bring your friends, enthusiasm and opinions, and help make decisions regarding the risks that might threaten your drinking water. Remember, for a balanced resolution, everyone needs to be heard.

YOU NEED TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE!

Working together may have its challenges, but the SAJB expects this to pay off by finding effective, innovative solutions and ultimately reasonable regulations that will protect our drinking water quality. You and your community have such a strong stake in the outcome that your active participation is vital. Just think what would happen if only one or two *special interest* groups were heard. This is not the time to "let someone else do it"!

The Citizens' Input Group's job will be to review fact sheets of summarized information about current processes, technologies and regulations concerning groundwater contamination. The goal of the group will be to develop recommendations that can be presented to the Spokane City Council, Millwood City Council, and the Spokane Board of County Commissioners. These recommendations, once taken into consideration by local government, may be implemented to provide an area wide, proactive wellhead protection program.

YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT!

Make sure that your views are heard by joining the SAJB in shaping the future of our community. Attend community meetings, listen, learn and help make the decisions.

The SAJB Member Districts

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Carnhope Irrigation District #7
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East Spokane Water District #1
Hutchinson Irrigation District #16
Irvin Water District #6
Kaiser Aluminum
Trentwood & Mead
Liberty Lake Sewer District #1
City of Millwood
Moab Irrigation District #20
Model Irrigation District #18
Modern Electric Water Company
Orchard Avenue Irrigation District #8
North Spokane Irrigation District #8
Pasadena Park Irrigation District #17
Spokane County Water District #3
Trentwood Irrigation District #3
Vern Water and Power
Whitworth Water District #2

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of each month in the offices of Vera
Water and Power, located at 601 N.
Evergreen in the Spokane Valley.
Visitors are welcome.*

**NEW MEETING
SCHEDULE!**

For More Information

*If you would like more information
about the Spokane Aquifer Joint
Board and its wellhead protection
activities, or to learn about our
Citizens' Input Group, please call
Gail Nelson at (509) 924-3800, or fill
out and mail this information card.*

FOR INFORMATION

Name
Address
City
State
Zip
Phone
Questions or Comments

Mail to:
Citizens' Input Group
P.O. Box 142055
Spokane, WA 99214-2055
detach here



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Dear Reader:

While most people in the Spokane area spent their summers relaxing and taking well deserved vacations, the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB) was hard at work. The Board has been busy organizing the last details of the potential contaminants that lie over our aquifer, defining the process for the Citizens' Input Group, and planning for community meetings. These details include a map displaying the location of activities that potentially could damage our aquifer.

Many groups are listening and have become involved. The following comments are from two of our community leaders.

"Our drinking water supply is one of the most important assets for our community," comments Tom Hargreaves, chair of the Friends of the Spokane River Valley. "When people irresponsibly spread fertilizer on their lawns, dump oil down drain pipes, or perform other such practices, they contaminate this essential resource until it is no longer usable."

"Development is not going to stop. But developers do need to be responsible and work with the entire community," says Don Moore of Centennial Realty. "A growing community, like Spokane, can maintain its quality of life through smart development and proactive environmental protection. But everyone must be at the table to give input."

Are you willing to help define the future? Two SAJB community meetings will take place this fall. These meetings will be forums at which citizens will be able to learn more about aquifer protection, give their input to the process, and help drive aquifer protection policy. Both meetings will be held in Spokane County. Look for finalized dates in the near future. In the meantime, for more information, please contact Gail Nelson at 924-3800.

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What is a Contaminant Source Inventory?

A Contaminant Source Inventory (CSI) is a required part of a wellhead protection program. The actual inventory is nothing more than a listing of possible sources of ground-water contamination.

The SAJB elected to obtain their information through historical research (newspapers, old maps, and reports), and governmental agencies that currently regulate the storage, transportation, and use of many types of chemicals. The SAJB's inventory selected only sources that use products or processes that require reporting, or sources that have caused contamination problems because of accidents, improper handling or disposal techniques. Also, included in the list are sites where old underground storage tanks exist, or sites that are designated as severely contaminated.

All sites were ranked according to their potential risk to the aquifer. Letters, informing businesses that they are located within a wellhead protection area and what risk ranking they have been assigned, will be mailed in September.

The inventory focused on large contaminant sources and has not attempted to locate small quantities of poisons, gasoline or other chemicals. These kinds of items accumulate in households and small business offices. In order to avoid contamination from these potential sources, the SAJB is relying on you to properly use and dispose of these products.