

# No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing.

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## WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE?

### Part 1 - RMU's Cryptosporidium Theory

Much to the surprise of county residents, George Anderson, republican candidate for County Commissioner in District 1, broke the long county tradition of ducking the issue of county zoning. Anderson is concerned about unplanned urban sprawl and the impact of development on agricultural land and groundwater contamination. Steve Sowers of the Rolla Daily News has asked this question of the commission candidates before, but they always gave the politically correct answer because county zoning was always a taboo subject with county residents. We passed county zoning once by accident and repealed it in the very next election. It's about time that we all talked about our WATER; is it safe to drink? what do we have to do to protect it? and how much do we have left?

**The Sacred Hog Pens.** County residents have historically had a Guns n' Ammo attitude about county zoning. "They ain't gonna tell me where I can put my hog pen!" has been the battle cry of many people who define personal freedom as license to be irresponsible community members. The reward for their antediluvian thinking has been the gradual pollution of private wells from household, cattle and farming operations. For decades we have all assumed that we could pump it up, foul it and throw it out anywhere because our beautiful Ozarks has an inexhaustible supply of pure

water. We believed the urban legend that all that rock below us was a perfect limestone filter; that it would purify any filth we carelessly dumped out and forever give us back clean water. We were wrong and now we are tasting the consequences.

The DNR boil order for the water at Woodcrest Trailer Park this June is the mine canary telling us we had better start basing our county and city development policies, not on how many buildings developers can profitably cram into an acre, but on how we can exercise some self-control for our own health and reverse the damage we have been doing since the county was first settled. Absent a willingness to pass county zoning so we could make our own regulations, laws for landfills, septic systems and wells have gradually been forced on us by the state and federal government. The state now tells all property owners outside incorporated areas that they can't sell their land if their wells and septic field systems don't pass state standards. Yes Siree Bob, that sure was smart thinkin' by county folks. It is equally smart thinkin' by city folks to spend millions on industrial development when no one has checked to see if we will always have available the many billions of gallons of water growth and industry demand.

**RMU's Cryptosporidium Theory.** This February, because of a new federal law requiring "truthful disclosure" about public water systems, RMU was forced to give city water customers information about their water.[1] They could have provided this information long before they were forced to - but they didn't. The

problem with RMU's "truthful disclosure" was that some test results were for 1996, some for 1997, and some for 1998, but there were no test results for 1999. What's the point of having test results from the water you drank four years ago? RMU has to test water samples every month and report them to the state, so why do we have to wait two or three years to find out the results? You will be as surprised as we were to learn that **RMU has its own state certified water-testing laboratory.** Their ability to do water tests for you may be a well-kept secret because, as the waiter told the guy with the fly in his soup, if word gets out everyone will want one.

The colorful RMU brochure gave specific out-of-date test results on several chemical contaminants, but artfully dodged reporting even out-of-date test results on the most worrisome contaminate, the cryptosporidium parasite. Cryptosporidium isn't the only dangerous organism that is found in dirty water, but it is a "marker," or one of the red flags that indicate other dangerous organisms such as fecal coliform bacteria may also be present. When cryptosporidium is found, further tests must be made immediately. Treating water with chemicals is no guarantee that the water is safe. In Milwaukee in 1993, more than 400,000 people became sick, 4,000 were hospitalized and as many as 100 died when cryptosporidium eluded the municipal water filtration and disinfection system.[2] But RMU's "truthful disclosure" had only this to say about cryptosporidium:

**"Cryptosporidium - Being a microscopic parasite associated with fecal contamination, cryptosporidium may plague surface water systems and poorly constructed wells. Rolla has neither. Because our water filters down through several hundred feet of soil and rock formations, many contaminants die, dissolve, and deteriorate long before they reach our water source. This being the case with cryptosporidium, Rolla's water does not have the problem."**

And the moon is made of green cheese. Notice that statement doesn't say they didn't find any evidence of cryptosporidium or other bacteria or parasites. In fact, they didn't actually say they tested for cryptosporidium at all; they just assume there isn't any.

**RMU's Scientific Method: Three False Premises = One False Conclusion.** The blasé conclusion that, "Rolla's water does not have the (cryptosporidium) problem" was based on three false premises. The first is that "Rolla has neither": surface water systems nor poorly constructed wells. Poorly constructed shallow wells are epidemic around Rolla and when areas have been annexed into the city, those shallow wells were just capped off and old septic systems disconnected from the house. As to the condition of the city's deeper wells, the information from Rolla's 1996 Comprehensive Plan gives no assurance that Rolla's wells are, in fact, well constructed. The report seems to hint that too little is known about their construction or current condition to say one way or another. Of the six water-bearing geologic formations penetrated by Rolla's 15 water wells, the Rolla Comprehensive Plan admits that the wells are cased through only the first three rock formations. This is far too much of a generalization for comfort. A 1992 geological report on Rolla's wells[3] has equally sketchy information about the construction and casing of each well. Details were again not available, and no opinion was offered by the geologist on whether casing and sealing on wells that have been dug since 1931

was adequate or not. Camera monitoring of the inside of well casing is a common industry practice. Does RMU have such inspections done?

RMU's second false premise - actually, it wasn't a false premise, it was just a lie - was that Rolla does not have surface water systems. We assume that they assume that "surface water systems" are only large lakes and reservoirs. Lakes and reservoirs aren't the only source for contaminants. Rolla has many surface water systems. In addition to the up and down percolation of springs and creeks, each cycle of which picks up ground contaminates, our miles of creeks and streams are also a surface water system. In many places those creeks and streams are the gravity storm drainage system for much of the town. In fact, a unique aspect of the Ozarks is that water percolates down from a multitude of fissures under creeks and streams and back up to the surface through millions of large and small springs and seeps and then down again, making almost the entire "skin" of the Ozarks a "surface water system." This "natural" drainage or surface water system picks up every kind of contamination dumped, poured, leaked, spilled or sprayed by all of us.

The third false assumption in the RMU brochure is the gross generalization that "many contaminates" die or dissolve long before they reach our water. **"Because our water filters down through several hundred feet of soil and rock formations, many contaminants die, dissolve, and deteriorate long before they reach our water source."** Many, (but not all) may die, dissolve and deteriorate, but only under the most ideal, slow-filtering soil and rock conditions. We don't have those conditions. Rolla is located in the Salem Plateau, the largest continuous karst terrain in southern Missouri. Contaminated ground water travels faster through the cracks, sinkholes, caves and springs that make up the Salem Plateau and similar karst formations than anywhere else. The Salem Plateau is called "a cave factory" because caves and

fissures are still constantly being formed right under us. Not exactly the ideal slow-filtering soil and rock conditions implied in RMU's propaganda, is it?

Based on three false premises, RMU concludes with typical carelessness that "Rolla's water does not have the problem." If Rolla does not have The Problem because of these allegedly ideal conditions, why didn't they give the results of the cryptosporidium tests as they did for the other contaminates? By digressing into generalities about wells, rock formations and the nature of cryptosporidium parasite under only the most ideal conditions, RMU neatly avoided telling us whether they found any evidence of cryptosporidium, either dead or alive, before they load the water with chemicals to kill the cryptosporidium, fecal coliform bacteria and other organisms which, they tell us, aren't in it. Are the tests taken before or after it is dosed with bug-killing chemicals? Despite the chlorine/fluoride treatment, why does it often smell of sewage? The RMU "truthful disclosure" document is remarkable for the amount of information it doesn't contain.

The EPA has an online publication, **"Fact Sheet for Citizen Monitoring: Recommendations to Public Water System Users."**[4] Whether you get your water from a private well, Public Water Supply District or city well, you should read and use it to understand what is going on with your water. The fact sheet says, **"Microbiological organisms can cause acute health effects. Although the potential for serious disease remains a concern, the most common illnesses due to the microbiological contamination of drinking water are short-term gastrointestinal disorders. Typical symptoms include cramps and diarrhea that may be mild to very severe."** Does that sound uncomfortably familiar? How often have you had a gippy tummy and said: "I must have eaten something bad" or "I must have some flu bug." That's probably what the

residents of Woodcrest Trailer Park were telling themselves before the boil order was announced.

**In Part 2:** RMU's water-testing practices and what happens to your water after they test it.

1 "Rolla Municipal Utilities Water Quality Report 1998" mailed to RMU customers in June 2000.

2 "Capturing Cryptosporidium" by Stephanie Joyce. Innovations, Volume 104, Number 8, August 1996, Environmental Health Perspectives.

<http://ehpnet1.niehs.nih.gov/docs/1996/104-8/innov.html>

"Cryptosporidiosis: An Emerging, Highly Infectious Threat" by Richard L. Guerrant, Univ. of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, Virginia.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol3no1/guerrant.htm>

3 Vandyke, James E., 1992, A Hydrologic Analysis of the Ozark Aquifer in the Rolla Area, Missouri, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geology and Land Survey. Water Resources Report No. 41, 84 p., 29 figs., 34 tables. P.O. Box 250, Rolla, MO 65401. \$8.00

4"Fact Sheet for Citizen Monitoring: Recommendations to Public Water System Users"  
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/Pubs/citizen.html>

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**Decisions are made by those who show up!** (author unknown)

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