

No Standing News

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

Volume I

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BUT THEY TEST OUR WATER, DON'T THEY?

Part 2 of: WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE?

Yes, RMU does test the water, but the catch is that water quality tests are taken, DNR tells us, in only eight carefully selected locations in Rolla: 1409 Martin Spring Drive (**Johnson Service Center**), 102 West 9th Street (**RMU business office**), 811 Pine Tree (**RMU Utilities Plant on the edge of town**), 500 Lanning Lane (**RMU water tower**) 1023 Kingshighway (**Burrell's Promenade**), 1903 Old St. James Road (**Havin Concrete**), 3900 Hypoint Blvd. (**Rolla Area Sheltered Workshop in RCDC's industrial park**) and 1440 Forum Drive (**Rolla Towers**). With 15 water wells and over 6,150 residences spread over 6,920 acres - only eight samples are taken. Are any of those sample locations close enough to your house or workplace to satisfy you? Did you really expect more diligence from the RMU Board, the people who have no public rate hearings, frequent blackouts, and who give away millions of dollars to city hall and RCDC?

After the Water Leaves the Test Site?

We don't think that in some parts of town the water would pass any test, after Rolla's water travels through aging water pipes laid near aging sewer pipes and crumbling storm drains where the soil may be saturated with decades of oozing sewage. Rolla is unique in that most water and sewer pipes are buried under the roads instead of behind the curbs

where smarter municipalities put their lines for easy access. The absence of public easements along many streets for public infrastructure is one of the city's political concessions to the subdivision developer's bottom line.

Rolla's lunatic engineering practice of putting water and sewer lines under streets causes continuous and unnecessary street repair and a lot of wasted tax money each time RMU digs up freshly resurfaced streets to patch a leaking pipe. With the weight of pounding traffic just a few inches above plastic, or old iron or clay water and sewer lines, it's not surprising that water lines often crack or break and sometimes erupt through the street. Cracked or crushed sewer lines laid alongside the water lines are not under the same pressure as water lines, so they just quietly ooze and leak their smelly burden into the surrounding soil. The EPA Fact Sheet [1] tells us something we had already figured out, that contaminants such as lead, nitrates and bacteria can enter drinking water **after** it has left the treatment plant or wellhead - where Rolla's eight samples are taken. **Faulty cross-connections with wastewater piping are often the source of nitrate contamination when it occurs in treated water. Nitrates are of special concern to young children and women of childbearing age. Excessive levels of nitrates have been linked to the occurrence of "blue baby" syndrome.** Of course, they are assuming those common distribution pipes are safely and sanely located away from roads and traffic. The EPA Fact Sheet also points out what may be another culprit in

Rolla's occasionally funny-looking and foul-smelling tap water. **"Bacteria can enter water following treatment in both the distribution system and household plumbing networks."** The problem might be in the line inside your property or in old household pipes. So what do you do about that?

"I'm Not Worried, I've Got a Filter."

Did you just read the claims on the box or did you get your water tested first to see what type of filter you need? A filter can make tap water look better or even taste better, but not all filters remove the invisible and tasteless organisms and other contaminants that can cause illness and even death. The EPA Fact Sheet also tells us, **"It is important to keep in mind that no single household treatment unit will remove all potential drinking water contaminants. Treatment is very specific to the substance(s) of concern."** First you have to get your water tested to find out exactly what kind of filter you need and whether the problem is in the RMU line or in the water line on your property or the pipes in your house. Now that you know about their certified water lab, you can quit wondering about your strange water and call RMU to test the water where it connects at your property line. That will at least tell you if the problem is their line or your line. If you only have a filter on your kitchen tap you're still at risk: That's why we say you shouldn't open your mouth and sing in the shower.

What about building storm water basins to catch the run-off before contaminants get into the ground? The city thinks their

new 3-acre lake in Ber Juan will keep homes from flooding; we doubt it, but all they have done is create a second Schuman Park Lake - more surface water RMU says we don't have. Storm basins don't help with contamination. As Tom Aley explained in the March 2000 issue of the Missouri Conservationist, **"Developers often construct basins to detain storm water and reduce flash flooding in urban and suburban areas. However, most of these basins do not provide treatment to improve the quality of the detained water, and in some cases these detention basins have been located on top of losing stream segments."**[2] In a recent example, developer Mike Woessner was required to put a retaining pond in a new development to control surface runoff, but he also managed to get the City Council to make taxpayers pay to construct the retaining pond for him and then maintain it forever. The city is really tough on developers. The Corps of Engineers later nixed the Woessner plan because the retaining pond would have been on top of a stream.

Rolla's Planning & Zoning Code gives only token attention to the direct link between developers and the effect of their land use activities on our water supply. The county has no zoning so they do nothing about it at all. Rolla's inadequate land use regulations are easily avoided by developers who whine, get special exceptions from the code or threaten to sue the city if their profits are threatened by the expense of meeting any kind of minimum requirements. The new city planning guy, John Petersen, has already revised the zoning codes and is now hot to write a new City Comprehensive Plan. We would like the next so-called Comprehensive Plan to speak honestly about the city's problems and set goals for the future. The 1996 version was sanitized to the point where it could have been used for a Chamber "Good News" brochure. A "Plan" that identifies no problems and proposes no solutions is a complete waste of money. The council, as usual, has not given any in-depth attention to what Petersen had

them change in the new zoning code. There was, however, much discussion from citizens during the public hearing on the changes. Does the new zoning code address any land use issues designed to protect our public water supply? Will the next Comprehensive Plan be nothing more than another palliative marketing brochure?

All this information about water makes you wonder about the boil order at Woodcrest and those gastrointestinal upsets or 'flu-like' symptoms you may have had now and then. It makes you wonder why the city has taken a sudden interest in making developers build detention ponds. The Rolla Engineering and Parks Department have been using public parks and the creeks that cut through Rolla to dump construction rubble; what else have they or others dumped in these open public drains?

What about the new three-acre "containment" lake the city is building in Ber Juan Park? Ken Kwantes used to complain that the old pool leaked thousands of gallons of water. With pool water pouring down the hill, why wasn't 10th street in flood every summer? Is it possible that the pool water didn't drain down the hill but fell into fissures or sinkholes under the park and from there into our drinking water? Are there sinkholes or old mining areas under Ber Juan Park where they are planning to build the recreation center? We won't know until it's too late because the city is racing ahead with their plans despite the repeated warnings of a local geologist. On the karst formation of the Salem Plateau the roof of a cave or sinkhole can collapse suddenly due to many factors. In 1967 a sinkhole collapsed at Buckhorn, just a few miles away, at the end of a box culvert under the westbound lane of I-44. The sinkhole was about 20 feet in diameter, 22 feet deep and opened into a cave system; a few years before that, a 42 x 65 foot sinkhole suddenly opened up in Lebanon, Missouri.[4] In the 1970s a bulldozer fell through into a big cavern at Ft. Leonard Wood. Pretending that all of the underlying geology in the Ozarks is

"solid as a rock" and a perfect limestone filter is beyond foolish and is contradicted by every scientific source.

We have become conditioned to accept a lot of substandard services from local government - failing power and suspect water are two of those things that have become the norm for Rolla; you know the service is no good but you pay for it anyway. The very least that rate-paying citizens should demand are water quality tests taken in residential neighborhoods, schools and health centers; tests to see what happens to the water in the miles of lines between the eight carefully selected sample sites and your property line. The least RMU should do for the money you pay them is give you the tests you need to find out what kind of water filtration system you should buy to protect your family, the children in your school, your employees, customers or the patients in your nursing home. If you don't trust RMU to test your water, there are a number of private certified testing labs. Private tests can cost from \$50 to over \$100 depending on what you want your water tested for. County residents can get their water tested through the County Health Department for only \$10. But Rolla residents cannot use the County Health Department service because RMU has a certified water-testing laboratory. If RMU charges anything for this service you shouldn't have to pay more than the \$10 that county residents pay.

Coming in part 3: The "Boil Your Poopy Water" order.

NOTE: So far DNR has identified seven major losing streams in Phelps County, they are: Bradford Branch, Corn Creek, Mill Creek, Deep Hollow, one unnamed tributary, Little Piney Creek and Hardester Hollow. Smaller tributaries, such as those that run through Rolla are not listed but they may also be "losing" streams.

1 EPA "Fact Sheet for Citizen Monitoring: Recommendations to Public Water System Users"

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/Pubs/citizen.html>

2 "Karst Groundwater", by Thomas J. Aley. **Missouri Conservationist**, March 2000, Vol.61, Issue 3, page 8.

3 "Below Missouri Karst" by William R. Elliott. **Missouri Conservationist**, March 2000, Vol.61, Issue 3, page 4.

4 Groundwater Contamination and Sinkhole Collapse Induced by Leaky Impoundments in Soluble Rock Terrain by Thomas J. Aley, James H. Williams and James W. Massello, 1972. Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geology and Land Survey, P.O. Box 250, Rolla, MO.

Decisions are made by those who show up!
SILENCE EQUALS CONSENT

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