

**CAPE MAY COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT
AND
IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2009**

Goal: Clean and Plentiful Water

Cape May County rivers, lakes, and coastal waters will be fishable, swimmable and support healthy ecosystems. Surface and ground water will be clean sources of water. Every person in Cape May County will have safe drinking water. Adequate quantities of surface and ground water will be available for all uses.

Indicators:

- The number of PNC water systems, inspections compliance rates, and penalty assessments
- The number of surface water-samples and results
- Private Well Testing Act results
- The number of private wells sampled
- Migrant farm camp wells sampled
- Recreational lakes sampled
- Ground and surface water complaints

Key Issues- Priorities

Although most ground water in Cape May County is of high quality, chemicals affect some ground waters and bacteria that may be present at levels that would be detrimental to human health. Elevated levels of sodium and chloride have been found in some areas of the Villas, Lower Township. In Lower Township, many users of well water are connecting to public water as new lines are being run. Cape May has already been using a desalination plant for their water supply.

Private (homeowner) wells are sampled if water quality problems are suspected. Generally, these suspected problems are associated with a contaminated site or as a result of an ongoing investigation into a specific contaminant (e.g., volatile organics). The volatile organic contaminates may also be a result of a haz-mat spill or vehicle accident. At the request of homeowners, this department is sampling for volatile organics in the Petersburg section of Upper Township. This is in response to a possible contamination of groundwater by a NJDOT site on Perry Road.

This department has undertaken some activities to educate private well owners about water quality and testing. Education regarding septic systems is also available.

Although there are sufficient quantities of water to meet statewide needs, some areas of the state are projected to experience shortages of water. These deficits may worsen as population and demand for water increase.

Being a peninsula, Cape May County is an extremely popular destination for recreational bathing, boating, fishing, and other water activities. This department tests coastal waters weekly from May to September to assess conditions for these activities.

The department, in partnership with the residents, community watershed association, natural resource conservation organizations, farmers, local governments, businesses and industries from each watershed, will assess existing information to identify key issues and problems specific to their watershed management area. The significant causes of water quality problems, including point and non-point sources of pollution, will be evaluated and the opportunities for improvement identified. Then, based on this evaluation, a set of strategies tailored to that particular watershed management area would be implemented to achieve water resources goals and milestones, including water quality standards, in each watershed management area.

Activities

This department will attempt to continue our Wellhead Protection Program by sampling domestic well clusters in Lower Township. This sampling has uncovered volatile organic, sodium, and chloride contamination. If volatile organic contaminants are identified in a sample, further sampling in the area is conducted to determine the extent. Data from wellhead is shared with NJDEP and United States Geological Survey (USGS). Lower Township is providing city water lines to areas identified as having saltwater intrusion and VOC contamination. In areas where city water is not available the Spill Fund provides for P.O.E.T. systems.

Under the private well testing act, Cape May County will certify well water for real estate transactions. We will also certify other new wells for coliform, nitrates, iron, manganese, pH, and chlorides. Through this certification process, we will be alerted when contamination of a well is identified. Testing laboratories will also contact us regarding high counts. If deemed necessary follow up sampling of neighboring wells will be performed. Residents are notified by mail and asked to make an appointment for testing. Spill Fund applications are provided if contamination is detected.

Of the approximate two hundred public non-community water systems in Cape May County, one-quarter transient, and one-half non-transient facilities are inspected each year for compliance. NJDEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water alerts this department of any significant non-compliers. We will inspect these facilities and issue notices of violation and settlement penalties. The Drinking Water Database is used to track results that are submitted to NJDEP. There have been increasingly less violations due to the enforcement of Zero Tolerance. With the coordination of NJDEP, old violations are being addressed and corrected in the database.

New physical connections are also inspected and reported to NJDEP.

The Cape May County Health Department enforces all Chapter 9A regulations to protect the quality of the ground and surface waters. This department must regulate new and altered septic system installations, review construction plans, witness soil test pits and certify installations in accordance with State standards. Complaints regarding unpermitted discharge of sewage and septic system malfunctions are also investigated. Because portions of this county lie in areas of Pinelands, this department coordinates with the Pinelands Commission when a septic system application is received. Before this department issues a septic permit, all Pinelands requirements must first be met. The Pinelands Commission requires the use of alternative septic systems on parcels of land less than three acres. This department will review and inspect these systems as necessary. At this time there have been eight of these systems installed in Cape May County.

Surface water quality is monitored regularly throughout the county. This department's water monitoring program will assist in determining surface water quality. The five programs include '208' Non-Point Source Monitoring Program (17 sites), Tuckahoe River Project (5 sites), Pine Barrens Water Quality Survey (14 sites), Delaware Bay Tributaries (13 sites), and Estuarine Water Planning/Research Program (12 sites). In the summer months, Back Bay Environmental (44 sites) and the Delaware Bay (8 sites) are also sampled. Future objectives include identifying sources of problem areas and eliminating these sources. Upon request, this data can be utilized by watershed management planning groups. Summer testing results are forwarded to municipalities and newspapers for informational purposes.

The Cape May County Water Quality Management Plan may be updated this year. It is still undetermined whether the County will undertake this project or release it to individual municipalities.

The Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program (CCMP) continues to be a high priority in Cape May County. Sampling includes Ocean Recreational (59 sites), and Back Bay Recreational (8 sites). These sites are tested from mid May to mid September. Storm water runoff is also an important part of this program. Non-point source pollution can cause problems such as beach closures. Increased monitoring after major storm events can help to identify problem areas within municipal infrastructures (stormwater systems). Steps can then be taken by the municipalities to prevent future contamination of ocean and back bay waters. Municipalities have also been borrowing the sewer cameras to identify any possible problems.

With a number of precautionary beach closures due to medical waste, this department has informed municipalities on procedures for medical waste incidents. The document "2008 Interagency Protocol for Response to Medical Waste Abandonments and Marine Floatables Incidents", compiled by NJDEP Solid and Hazardous Waste, was distributed to municipal officials.

This department continues to collect from all municipalities within the county the list of recreational bathing lakes and coliform bacteria testing performed. This data is then forwarded to NJDEP Clean Shores.

All results for CCMP sampling are sent to NJDEP via computer and are posted on the web site: www.capemaycountyims.net. This site is an Internet map server site.

Goal: Clean Air

It is important that the air we breathe is healthful and that pollutants do not damage our environment. Cape May County is a sensitive ecosystem.

Indicators:

- The number of ozone action days
- The number of minor and B-source facilities. These numbers are minimal in relation to other sections of the State because the main industry in Cape May County is the summer tourist industry.
- The number of gas stations and dry cleaners and the number of compliance. There are only a few dry cleaners in the county. Monitoring dry cleaners will not be a problem.
- Citizen complaints as well as complaints from the NJDEP will be addressed and acted on accordingly.
- The number of compliance and enforcement documents issued to B-source facilities and gas stations.

Key issues – Priorities

The county is concerned about ozone. Ozone exposure can cause coughing, chest pains and throat irritation in healthy individuals and asthma reactions in sensitive individuals. There is a large senior citizen population in this county that is subjected to increased illnesses, and possible death, associated with the exposure to high ozone levels. Another area of concern is fine particulate matter, primarily from incomplete combustion from vehicular traffic. During the summer months, cars are backed up for miles due to traffic jams going to our resort areas.

Odor complaints in the county are investigated as soon as they are reported. Notices of Violation and summonses are issued as deemed necessary. With increased building, more odor complaints are being received from areas around problem sites (MUA compost facilities, sewer pumping stations, etc). When a conflict arises with issuing County facilities NOV's, the NJDEP steps in and issues penalties.

Idling complaints are increasing, as more people are aware of the pollution it causes. More training is needed for local law enforcement so they can also enforce the regulations

Goal: Safe and Healthy Communities

Cape May County is tourist industry orientated with a sensitive ecological system. As such, it is extremely important that the county be free from unacceptable human health and ecological risks due to direct or indirect exposure to hazardous substances.

Indicators

- The number of haz-mat incidents (type and outcome of any cleanups)
- The number of indoor air quality complaints and their outcome.
- The number of solid waste facilities, inspections, and compliance rates
- The number of solid waste citizen complaints, types and outcomes
- The number of pesticide inspections and compliance rates
- The number of pesticide complaints and outcomes
- The number of noise complaints and outcomes

Key Issues- Priorities

This county has expanded and has changed dramatically over the last fifty years. We have learned the hard way that hazardous waste cannot be disposed of in a reckless manner. Over application of chemicals has been an age-old problem. Educating the public and industry to properly dispose of unused portions of potentially hazardous chemicals is vital.

We will also continue to respond to NJDEP referrals for haz-mat incidents and spills. In addition, we will also respond to local complaints. We have advised the NJDEP, local police, and emergency management of our ability to respond on a twenty-four hour basis.

Our haz-mat team is training and updating their skills in the event of a terrorist threat. Special practice drills are scheduled to coordinate various agencies in emergency situations. These agencies include local, municipal, and county government. Our haz-mat team is also involved with CBRNE activities.

Solid waste facilities will continue to be inspected for compliance. Solid waste complaints from citizens and NJDEP will be investigated. Enforcement action will be taken when necessary. Surveillance of truck routes and non-truck routes continues. Many violators take residential routes to and from Solid Waste facilities. Enforcement action will be taken when necessary. Inspections of trucks and containers is also ongoing.

Conduct interviews of solid waste transporters needing NJDEP decals.

Locating and cleaning up tire sites will be a priority due to West Nile Virus. Dead crows and blue jays are also collected and transported to Trenton to be tested for West Nile Virus.

The improper handling and use of pesticides can create risks to anyone in the vicinity of the application of those chemicals. We are now participating in the School IPM inspections.

Commercial and residential noise complaints investigated by this department are resulting in more violations being issued. The adoption of the "Model Noise Ordinance" by municipalities would assist in the enforcement of noise violations.

As new situations and educational courses come to our attention, we will strive to update ourselves so that we can meet emerging problems.

Goal: Open and Effective Government

Cape May County Health Department will work to achieve its goals through the involvement of citizens, stakeholders, and government entities.

Key Issues- Priorities

This department would like to have our data easily available for public and governmental use. The surface water data will be useful for a watershed management program. With our new computer system, we can input facilities as they are inspected, which makes it easier to track complaints, investigations. The data can be pulled for various reports including those of water contamination cases that could be useful for State and Local entities.

As a result of the Open Public Records Act, this department will provide information to persons filing a proper request form. Many private companies use our records/data for the completion of environmental assessments.

Information on the Cape May County Health Department's programs can be found at www.cmchealth.net