

ROCKY LEDGE PUBLIC WATER PROGRAM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Working Document, Last Updated August 24, 2017

What Properties are included in the Rocky Ledge Public Water Program (RLPWP)?

The RLPWP includes the properties in the Rocky Ledge Study Area as defined in the Draft *Wastewater Facilities Plan*. Specifically, it includes approximately 122 properties on Rocky Ledge Drive, Oakwood Lane, Margo Lane, Woodland Drive, Happy Acres Road and several homes on the west side of Route 81 between Happy Acres Road and Rocky Ledge Drive.

Who is installing the public water main extension?

The actual construction phase of the Rocky Ledge water main extension is the Town's project assigned to the Town's Department of Public Works (DPW). Design of this project was completed in early 2017, and complies with the Connecticut Water Company (CWC) standards and the Department of Public Health (DPH) requirements in order to be eligible for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) financing and potential grants. The project will be publicly bid for construction by a qualified contractor.

How, and why, is the WPCC involved if this is a construction project?

The primary purpose of extending the water main is to address the DEEP Consent Order regarding a documented community pollution problem and the impact of septic systems in the Rocky Ledge Study Area. Therefore, the Selectmen have requested that the WPCC develop the RLPWP to ensure that the construction project fulfills the expectations of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) in its approval of this approach.

What is included in the construction project?

When the Town allocated funding for the design phase of the project, Town leaders made the decision to include the pipe that goes from the street into the house in the project. The water main construction project and costs will include certain plumbing work that needs to be done inside each home to make the actual connection to the water supply line. In addition, the project includes disconnecting the indoor plumbing from the well (a requirement of the CWC prior to service being turned on), and the final step of properly abandoning the well.

As an added safety benefit to all Town residents, the project also includes installation of fire hydrants throughout the area with additional hydrants along Route 81 and Walnut Hill Road.

Why is the Program so comprehensive?

This project is different than other water main extension projects you may be familiar with because this Program is intended to address a community pollution problem that affects a large area of Town. Normally, when water mains are extended through the CWC, those projects do not include any work on private property. In such instances, the homeowner is responsible for hiring the contractor to install the pipe from the street to the house, a plumber to do the connection inside and a licensed well driller to abandon the well. Due to the Consent Order, public health, and environmental issues

associated with this project, the WPCC and the Town have included the extra work on each lot in the project scope of work because it is essential to DEEP acceptance of this solution that property owners connect to the public water system. Accomplishing these connections will allow residents access to safe drinking water and the ability to upgrade/repair their septic systems. The Town and its engineers have the expertise to oversee all facets of the service installation and well abandonment. The Town will bid out the water project construction to ensure competitive costs.

What are the benefits to the Town of the Rocky Ledge Water Main Extension?

Regulatory Compliance

- It will help ensure compliance with the DEEP Consent Order and remove the possibility of more expensive sewers in this area instead. The Town will not have any sewer pump stations or treatment equipment to maintain in this area.
- It will represent a significant step toward complying with the Consent Order and avoiding potential monetary penalties of up to \$25,000 per violation per day in accordance with CT General Statutes (CGS) Title 22a, Chapter 446k (Section 22a-416 et seq).

Public Health and Safety

- As part of the water main extension fire hydrants will be installed in a densely populated area where the Clinton Volunteer Fire Department must currently haul water to in an event of an emergency. Consequently, the fire rating of the Town will be improved.
 - 10 hydrants will be installed on Route 81 between Walnut Hill Road and Rocky Ledge Drive
 - 2 hydrants will be installed on Happy Acres Drive
 - 1 hydrant will be installed on Walnut Hill Road at Happy Acres Drive
 - 1 hydrant will be installed on Cow Hill Road at Woodland Drive
 - 3 hydrants will be installed on Woodland Drive
 - 2 hydrants will be installed on Margo Lane
 - 2 hydrants will be installed on Oakwood Lane
 - 3 hydrants will be installed on Rocky Ledge Drive

These additional hydrants expand the fire protection benefit to the Town, beyond just the residential streets in the Rocky Ledge area.

Financial Benefits

- The hydrants to be installed as part of this project will reduce the cost of another planned Town project. The Fire Department is planning a water storage tank project to improve access to water in areas of Town without public water. The addition of hydrants as part of this Rocky Ledge water main extension will result in reduction of approximately \$300,000 to \$400,000 in the water storage tank project budget.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

- Neighbors helping neighbors – by supporting a construction project that will help ensure access to a safe and reliable source of drinking water.
- Neighbors helping neighbors – by increasing the potential for Public Health Code (PHC)-compliant septic system upgrades for members of your community.

What are the benefits to the Rocky Ledge Area homeowners of connecting to public water?

There are many reasons why connecting to the public water during the construction project is encouraged.

Public health and safety:

- Many of the wells in the study area have water quality issues currently. Elevated levels of nitrates, as well as the presence of bacteria, viruses and other contaminants have the potential to cause disease. The only way to know if your water is safe to drink is to have it tested, which costs about \$100, and should be done annually. Sampling completed to date indicates that impacts to wells are present and are likely more widespread within the study area. Annual well sampling in such an area may therefore not be sufficient to determine the seasonal variations in water quality. By connecting to public water, you will not have to worry if your water is safe to drink or not.
- If your well is a shallow (dug) well the risk of contamination is high according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DPH, making this source of drinking water unreliable. Due to the dependence on shallow groundwater aquifers these wells are also subject to going dry during drought conditions.
- As part of the water main extension project, fire hydrants will be installed. The obvious benefit is fire protection, but it may also reduce your homeowner's insurance premiums.
- If your well is less than 75' from any septic system (including your neighbor's) it is a violation of the PHC. At this time, the location of approximately 46 septic systems (approximately 38%) in the Rocky Ledge Study Area are unknown, meaning that not all potential PHC violations are quantifiable.

Financial Benefits

- You will no longer have to be concerned with emergency pump replacement which can cost thousands of dollars, or well replacement which can cost even more.
- Connecting will eliminate the cost of installing or maintaining a water treatment system, as there will be no need to have a water treatment system.
- Connecting will eliminate the concern about low pH water which, if not treated, causes pinhole leaks in the copper plumbing. Several of your neighbors report having to bear the cost of replacing copper plumbing lines in their homes.

Property Ownership Benefits

- You will be able to upgrade your septic system to PHC standards. Having a system that is properly sized for the use it gets and the existing soil conditions is important for increasing the reliability and longevity of the system.
- Connecting also helps if you sell your home. Both buyers and mortgage brokers typically require proof before a sale that the drinking water quality is safe and reliable and, at a minimum, that the septic system is not failing or malfunctioning.
- Connecting may allow for improvements to your home and property that could not be permitted before, due to limited available area for PHC-compliant septic upgrades.
- If you lose electricity you will still have water.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

- Neighbors helping neighbors - the CWC will contribute to the cost of the water main extension based on the number of property owners who choose to participate. The more who participate, the more they will contribute.
- Neighbors helping neighbors - by eliminating wells and the 75' separation distance between any well and septic system. When wells and septic systems are too close together the potential exists for drinking water quality to be adversely impacted, whether it's on your property or your neighbor's.

What if I (a Rocky Ledge Area homeowner) do not want to connect to the water main at the time of the construction project because of my concern about costs?

- If you choose not to connect to the water during the construction of the Project, but decide to connect in the future there will be no construction or financial assistance, so all of the work on your property would have to be paid by you directly.

What agreements are required to allow the Town's chosen contractors to do the work on my property?

There are two agreements that will likely be required.

- The Town will require that you sign an access agreement which will outline the actual work to be done and clarify property owner, Town, and contractor responsibilities.
- The second agreement, known as a service agreement, will be between each property owner and the CWC before water service is activated.

Once the water main is installed and property owners are connected, who will maintain the system?

The Town is the applicant for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) monies and will be responsible for repayment of the loan, likely over twenty years. CWC will maintain the system as part of an operational service agreement with the Town, but the Town is the owner until full repayment of the DWSRF loan (see "Project Costs and Financing" below for more funding details).

Even after I connect to public water, will the WPCC still require me to upgrade my septic system?

Like all Clinton property owners, owners in the Rocky Ledge area are required to comply with the PHC. Currently, the PHC only requires a property owner to repair/upgrade their septic system under certain circumstances.

- If the system is failing or malfunctioning with sewage on the ground, sewage backing up into the home; sewage backflow from the leaching system into the septic tank.
- If a building permit is applied for through the Town that will impact the required separation distances between the building and any part of the septic system.
- If a building permit is applied for that increases the number of bedroom by more than 50%.

In addition, as part of the DEEP Consent Order, groundwater pollution from inadequate septic systems in many areas of Town must be addressed. To this end, the WPCC with their engineering consultant has developed a *Draft Wastewater Facilities Plan* that the WPCC has submitted to the DEEP for approval. Many areas of Town, in addition to the Rocky Ledge Study Area, as proposed in the *Draft Wastewater Facilities Plan*, will continue to depend upon septic systems for wastewater

disposal. Working towards implementation of the Plan recommendations, the WPCC is charged to develop a Decentralized On-Site Wastewater Management Program that will spell out the requirements for septic system monitoring, maintenance, and/or upgrades in all of the Study Areas that will continue to depend upon septic systems. At this time, the program is in the discussion phase with the WPCC and its engineering consultant but it is expected to include inspection and monitoring and be phased in over a period of several years. The CRAHD will also be involved, as any work done to a septic system must have their approval and must comply with the PHC. Any property owner may, at any time, work with the CRAHD to repair/upgrade their septic system.

PROJECT COSTS AND FINANCING

What is the cost of the project and who will pay?

- Currently, the total cost of the Project is estimated to be \$5.15 million. This includes approximately \$3.6 million for the water main construction, \$1.3 million for work to connect homes to the water main and \$ 0.25 million for costs to bond the project
- With the results of the water testing done in 2011 and 2014 as well as information gathered by the WPCC during a thorough review of property files in Town Hall and at CRAHD, DPH and the DEEP agreed that the Rocky Ledge Study Area had a “community pollution problem”. (Refer to data in Table 1 at end of this document). This determination made the Town eligible for DWSRF monies. The Town is eligible for the money in the form of a 20-year loan, likely at a low, approximately 2%, interest rate. The Town will have to repay the loan over 20 years.
- In addition, the Town has applied for a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant through the State Office of Policy and Management for up to \$500,000. Should the Town be awarded the STEAP grant that money will be used to help defray the cost of the project.
- The CWC has also agreed to provide financial assistance with an amount to be determined based on the number of properties connecting at the time of construction. The CWC contribution will reduce the total project cost to all Town taxpayers.
- The Board of Selectmen is responsible for determining how the water main extension project will be paid for.
 - Existing Clinton Town Code, Chapter 509 (Water), Article I (Water Main Extensions) – Section 509.1 Reimbursement of Costs reads as follows: “Whenever the Town appropriates funds to extend a water main into an area... used or zoned for residential purposes, each owner of property abutting such extension shall reimburse the Town for a proportionate share of the cost to the Town of such extension; provided, however, ... that such reimbursement may be waived whenever the Town and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection concur in determining the need for such extension in response to a community pollution problem...”.
- The town will continue to seek other funding possibilities.

How are the various funding sources applied to the water main extension construction project?

- It is anticipated that the Town will finance the entire project amount.
- The CWC contribution, and STEAP grant if received, will be applied to the project to reduce the total amount that the Town is responsible for. The State DWSRF will loan the remainder of the funds to the Town, to be repaid over 20 years. (The final loan amount will be determined

after the project is bid and CWC contribution and STEAP grants are accounted for, reducing the amount that the Town will have to repay in loan form.)

How does the financing for this project compare to possible financing for a sewer project?

While it is understandable to compare the two types of projects due to WPCC involvement, the financing of a water main extension project can be considerably different from a sewer project based on regulation and statutory authority and loan sources.

A primary difference is in the regulations that guide options for financing of a sewer system. Specifically, Connecticut General Statute 7-249 allows communities to charge a “betterment” fee to properties improved by sewer service. There are no equivalent state regulations discussing a “betterment” for water main projects. The Town ordinance referenced above discusses reimbursement by property owners, but allows for the reimbursement to be waived in the case of a community pollution problem.

In either case, the regulatory structure allows a Town some discretion in determining the most appropriate cost sharing model for each type of project.

Can I use my own contractor to connect?

This project will provide financing for Town-approved contractors only. Therefore, if you hire your own contractors you will be responsible for all installation costs as well as coordination of the contractors doing the work. Typically, using the contractor vetted and hired by the Town through a bid process will result in a savings by cost sharing across multiple properties in the neighborhood.

Table 1
Rocky Ledge Area – Summary of Public Health Concerns
Private Drinking Water Wells, Water Quality Sampling (2011 and 2014)
And Public Health Code Non-Compliance (Wells and Septics)

Constituent	Number of Properties
Total Number of Properties in Rocky Ledge Study Area	122
Number of Properties With Well Water Tested in 2011 or 2014	48
Total Number of Properties with Confirmed Water Quality Violations or PHC Exceptions ^(1, 2)	64 (53% of all properties)
Total Number of Properties with Water Quality Violations ⁽¹⁾	34 (70% of sample set)
Number of Properties with Coliform Present	8 (17% of sample set)
Number of Properties with Elevated Nitrates (>5 milligrams/Liter)	24 (50% of sample set)
Number of Properties with pH <6.4	8 (17% of sample set)
Number of Properties with Turbidity >5 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU)	1 (2% of sample set)
Total Number of Properties with Other Confirmed PHC Non-Compliance (2)	40

Notes: (1) Numerous properties had more than one violation or exception. Not all properties had well water tested.

(2) PHC Non-Compliance includes confirmed undersized leaching area, undersized leaching system spread for the hydraulic capacity of the site, or confirmed less than 75-foot separation distance between a well and septic system. Not all properties have file information documenting PHC compliance. Approximately 38 properties do not have file information on location/construction of septic system. It is reasonable to anticipate a similar percentage of non-compliance with these additional properties.