

Checklist for Conducting a Tour of Your Watershed

Many local Water Departments host a tour of their Water Treatment Plant during Drinking Water Week, which is may 1-8 this year. We are trying to organize tours of the watershed for your public drinking water supply so local residents can see and better understand the source of their public drinking water and how it needs to be protects. This is written for a surface water supply, a pond or reservoir, but could easily be adapted to be used where the water comes from wells. Here are the basic steps to organizing a tour of your watershed:

1. Identify where your watershed is located. You can find this out by calling the Water Department and asking to look at the SWAP map that was completed last year by the state for them.
2. Look on the map and identify 1-4 key locations where people on the tour could view the local pond or reservoir where their water comes from, tributaries that feed that water body, and the intake to the treatment plant. [For a town with just wells, identify the location of all the wells and the Zone II areas that contribute water to it.]
3. Plan a simple route that could be traveled in no more than 30 – 90 minutes by foot and/or by car; preferably starting at a tributary that feeds into the pond/reservoir, then the pond/reservoir, and ending up at the intake to the treatment plant. [For wells, use the largest wellfields and 1 or more locations n the Zone II where a brook or stream flows water toward the wells.
4. After drawing up a draft tour route, talk to the local Water Superintendent or Water/DPW Commissioners [if there is one] and ask them to host a watershed tour. See if they will donate their facilities at the Water Treatment Plant for the tour to end and if they can offer any other assistance to help organize and hold the event.
5. Do a dry run of the tour yourself to see how long it takes and to identify any potential problems.
6. Draft up a simple 1-page flyer with the basic details on the tour noting the locations on the tour and giving a basic map of the tour, where to start, etc. Put the flyer up in local stores, distribute it as widely as possible to let people know as far in advance as possible.
7. Write and send out a press release that “The [city/town] Water Department invites resident to walk their watershed.” After emailing or faxing the release to local papers call them to make sure they got it. Also send it to the calendar/events sections of newspapers and ask them to include it in those listings.
8. Contact the local schools to see if any science teachers want to take their class(es) on the tour as an educational event.
9. Let the local Police Department know as a courtesy and to see if they know of any other events that day that could interfere.
10. Invite the local Board of Selectmen/City Council, and other town officials.
11. Recruit volunteers to help put up signs to identify the various tour locations, run the event, drive cars with participants, sign up participants, clean up afterward, etc.
12. **On the day of the event**, walk/drive the tour route in advance to make sure there are no new problems, make sure the signs are up at the tour locations, and that everything is ready.
13. Clean up the tour route of any litter right after the event or the next day!