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New treatment plan to help address DEP water concerns

By **Katie Liesener / Daily News Staff**

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WAYLAND -- The state Department of Environmental Protection is putting its foot down.

After sending the town five notices in the past 18 months for not complying with state water regulations, the DEP has sent the town a consent order of stricter requirements.

If Wayland does not adhere to the new requirements, the state will fine the town \$5,225, with additional fines for each day the town is in violation.

Under the new guidelines, the town will be required to speciate -- or break down -- any positive coliform samples collected this year to better determine where the bacteria is coming from.

The town will also have to collect heterotrophic plate counts (HPC) on a monthly basis. Like the speciation tests, HPC collections break down bacteria. The Water Department already takes these collections from water leading into the distribution system; now it will collect from the distribution system as well, said David Fields, the department's working foreman.

The DEP has also requested a detailed plan for increasing and maintaining the town's chlorine reservoirs. The town has kept chlorine on hand for the past five years to kill coliform bacteria when they are found in the water distribution system, Fields said.

Finally, the town will have to submit its final design plans for the Baldwin Pond treatment facility to the DEP by the end of the year.

These requirements come on the heels of the most serious of Wayland's recent water violations. In October, the town reported four coliform positive samples, one of which tested positive for E. coli. The town failed to notify the public of the E. coli discovery within 24 hours, as required by the state.

Fields said at the time he was under the impression the DEP would make the notification decision and consequently left a message with the department the day of the discovery, which was a Friday. The DEP did not receive the message until the following Monday, when it informed the town of its violation and that new restrictions would be forthcoming.

Fields said the stricter regulations could be costly. As an example, he said that a speciated coliform test costs \$100; whereas a normal coliform test costs \$10.

"We're down to the wire, needing this water treatment plant," Fields said. "Increased water usage is wearing on the wells, which changes water quality and puts us in the position where we need a new plant."

Fields said the Water Department should have a fairly specific estimate of what the new facility will cost to present to Town Meeting in April, even if the design is not yet finalized.

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