

# INFLOWMATION

*Westford Water Department Newsletter*

Water Commissioners:

- Leslie A. Thomas, Chairperson
- Douglas Deschenes, Secretary
- Robert Carter, Member
- Harold A. Fletcher, Alternate Member



Department Contacts:

- Warren Sweetser, Superintendent
- Robert Worthley, Treatment Manager
- Robin Fullford, Business Manager
- Elaine Major, Environmental Compliance Manager



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## Perchlorate

The Cote Well continues to remain off-line and the Water Department is awaiting information from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to proceed with treatment options. Although the State has not mandated perchlorate monitoring in 2005, the Water Department continues to collect samples to monitor for perchlorate on a monthly basis. New state regulations are pending that are expected to set a maximum contaminant level for perchlorate in public drinking water systems. The previous guidance level limit for MA was 1ppb. For additional information, call Elaine Major, the Environmental Compliance Manager, at 978-399-2457.



## Day in the Life of ....our Water Treatment Manager!

This is the first article in the beginning of a new series to describe what various people do during a typical day at the Water Department.

Robert Worthley (Bob) is the Water Treatment Manager and oversees all operations of the two water treatment facilities. Bob has a level 4 treatment and distribution state license and 19 years of experience in management and operations of water treatment plants. He is following in his father's footsteps and credits a lot of his instincts in creative problem solving to being exposed to water treatment operations as a child.

*(Cont. on page 2)*

## Treatment Manager Receives Award...

Robert Worthley, the Water Treatment Manager, received the first annual Harold A. Fletcher Education Award from the Massachusetts Water Works Association. He was recognized for his outstanding commitment in providing continuing education to Massachusetts Water Works Professionals from the President of the Association. The award is named in honor of Harold Fletcher, who has served the water industry in Westford and Massachusetts for over 50 years as a laborer, operator, superintendent, and/or commissioner. Since Harold's retirement in 1991, he has continued to serve as a Water Commissioner. Robert was selected to receive the award because he exemplifies Harold's commitment to continuing education of water works professionals and repeatedly serves the Association as an instructor. Robert, Harold, and the association president (Steven Sullivan), are pictured below.



## Rate Structure Update...



The Water Department received an interest-free loan received from the state revolving fund for construction of the two water treatment plants, which are being paid back over a 20-year period. Operational costs have now stabilized, and including loan payments, total expenses are approximately \$1.1 million/year. An anticipated rate increase will likely become effective July 1, 2005 to cover the existing expenses and future projects.

A consultant is currently studying the current and future funding needs and composition of our customer base. As in the past, we will work hard to create a new rate structure that is fair and equitable and protects vulnerable populations while providing the funding necessary to operate efficiently.

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## Conserve Water with Rainbarrels...

We will once again be offering rainbarrels at a discounted price to residents. The 55 gallon barrels collect rainwater from roof runoff and are wonderful for watering outside plants and gardens. Cost is \$62. To order, call 978-977-3135 or go to [www.nerainbarrel.com](http://www.nerainbarrel.com) Barrels will be available for pickup at the Water Department Open House on May 4 between 5:30 and 7:30pm If you have questions or would like to see one, stop by the Water Department. **The deadline for ordering is April 15!**



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## Annual Open House.....



The annual open house is set for Wednesday, May 4 from 5:30 to 7:30pm The public is invited to come by and tour the facility and visit displays with local experts on hand to answer questions. This year the open house will offer information about public and private well water testing, composting, filtration systems for private wells, organic lawn care, backflow prevention, and Board of Health recommendations for septic systems and private wells. We look forward to seeing you on May 4!

## Day in the Life of... cont. from page 1

A typical day for Bob starts with a review of the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system (SCADA). The SCADA system compiles all of the data for flow, chemical usage and levels, security, system pressure, storage information, etc. At the beginning of the day, Bob checks to determine what wells are running and the levels of water in the storage tanks. Next, he scans SCADA information to look for trends in the historical records for the previous night. If there is an irregularity, he investigates and makes a correction to improve it. If an emergency occurs, an alarm contacts the on-call person to handle the situation. Bob may be called at all hours for advice and to verify actions to correct the problem.

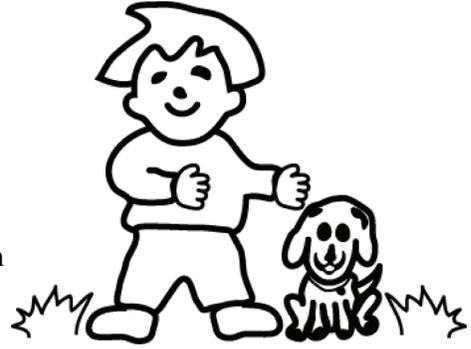
Bob meets daily with the treatment facility staff to review the scheduled activities for the day and provide guidance. Examples of typical activities include water treatment plant maintenance, calibration of on-line equipment, and scheduled maintenance of plants, meters, wells, etc. From his office, Bob continuously monitors the SCADA system output and reviews the on-line chemical monitoring results to improve treatment efficiency and fine-tune chemical treatment. Once a month, he compiles the water and chemical treatment data for each treatment plant. This information is required by the Department of Environmental Protection to ensure the Water Department is meeting state standards for drinking water. Bob works closely with the Environmental Compliance Manager to meet DEP requirements.

Bob often deals with new and unique problems related to water treatment and distribution that require research to resolve them. In addition, he works on a variety of special projects. These can include things such as special reports to DEP with proposed changes to plant processes to achieve more efficient operations, revisions of operation and maintenance manuals, troubleshooting electronics for more effective communication between all components of the system, bench-top testing to evaluate chemical dosing and filter efficiency, and monitoring pressure to determine timing for backwashing of the filters. Bob closely communicates with the field staff and is responsible for taking steps to insure your drinking water quality meets the state standards.

Bob also conducts in-house training to help the staff keep their state license certifications and to advance their skills. Recently, he received an award for his contributions to education (see page 1) and is committed to continuing education for water resource professionals. That's a day in the life of our Water Treatment Manager and Westford is indeed fortunate to have Bob and all of his expertise!

## Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families.....

Look for signs around town about the *Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families* initiative! The initiative, led by Elaine Major of the Water Department, is to promote pesticide awareness in Westford and the neighboring towns of Acton, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, and Littleton. Posters and brochures have been placed at the Town Hall, local pediatrician offices, day care centers, veterinarian clinics, and pet stores. Look for the video "Our Children at Risk", on the local cable television station. Several local nurseries are providing free organic lawn care workshops in March and April. Invited speakers will be presenting free talks for the public about organic lawn care and other community efforts to reduce pesticide use. Small lawn flags will be distributed to those homeowners committed to practicing organic lawn care. Information about the project will be included in your upcoming water bills.



Materials supplied for the project are funded by a grant from the UMass-Lowell Toxics Use Reduction Institute to build public awareness about the health risks from pesticides, provide information about alternative organic methods that are safer, and reduce pesticide use on a regional scale. Various opportunities are available for residents to learn about the harmful health effects from pesticides and how to use and apply safer organic lawn care methods. See the list of upcoming events on page 4 or visit [www.healthylawnsforhealthyfamilies.com](http://www.healthylawnsforhealthyfamilies.com) for more information about local learning opportunities, pesticides, and organic lawn care. We hope to establish a committee of local residents that will develop and recommend a lawn care policy for the Town. If you are interested in participating in such a committee, call Elaine at 978-399-2457.

### 8 Simple Steps for Organic Lawn Care:

**Feed the Soil-** Compost is one of the best things you can do for your soil to support a healthy lawn.

**Feed the Grass-** Leave grass clippings on the lawn to recycle nutrients, add organic matter, and reduce the need for fertilizers by a half.

**Reseed Annually-** Thick turf is one of the best ways to control weeds. Seed in late summer or early fall with the right mix and make sure your soil is well aerated.

**Test the Soil-** Soil tests help identify the need for soil amendments such as lime and compost.

**Mow High-** Cut grass at 3-4 inches. This conserves water and keeps out weeds. Keep blades sharp to limit disease.

**Water Only As Needed-** Too much water can make your lawn vulnerable to disease.

**Weed Control-** Pull weeds or use an organic product like corn gluten to keep weeds from germinating. For spot weed control, try a mixture of lemon juice and vinegar.

**Pest Control-** Common pests can be controlled with beneficial nematodes or milky spore powder. Using compost or liquid compost tea also helps to keep lawns healthy and pest-free.

### Did you know? ....

- Healthy soil is the cornerstone to successful organic lawn care.
- Anything that ends in "cide" means to kill.
- Pesticides kill all of the beneficial organisms in your soil as well as the targeted pests.
- Pesticides are carried into your home on shoes and pets' feet and get incorporated into your carpets and household dust and NEVER break down.
- Children and pets are especially vulnerable to these toxins.
- Pesticides can persist in the environment and can runoff and pollute water supplies.
- For professional **organic** lawn care providers, go to [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net) and hit the link to Accredited Professionals.



### Water Conservation Policy!

Our conservation policy is in effect from May 1st through October 31st. Even-numbered houses water on even-numbered days and odd-numbered houses water on odd-numbered days. Hand-held hoses or watering cans may be used at any time. Set your automatic sprinklers to coincide with our policy. Thank you!

**Westford Water Department  
April 2005 INFLOWMATION**

60 Forge Village Road  
P.O. Box 4026  
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### Hydrant Flushing!

Flushing will begin April 19 and continue for approximately 6 weeks usually between the hours of 8am and 3pm Monday through Friday. Occasionally, flushing may occur between the hours of 10pm and 2am. During flushing, water pressure may be low and the water discolored. Let the water run awhile and it should clear up quickly. Thank you for your cooperation!



### Hours of Operation:

7am to 4pm Monday-Friday  
(except Holidays)

### Numbers at a Glance:

Main Phone Line (978) 692-5529 or 399-2450  
Superintendent (978) 399-2454  
Water Treatment Manager (978) 399-2456  
Billing and Property Transfers (978) 399-2452  
Accounts Payable (978) 399-2451  
Business Manager (978) 399-2453  
Environmental Compliance Manager (978)399-2457

### Upcoming Events...

#### **Free Presentations:**

- March 9, 7pm at Rm 10, Millenium School, *Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families* by E. Major
- March 12, 10am at Westford Library *Marblehead...the Little Town that Could* by Chip Osbourne and Patricia Beckett of Marblehead
- March 21, 7pm at McCarthy Mtg Rm, Chelmsford Public Library, *Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families* by E. Major
- April 4, 7:30pm at 141 Keyes Rd., Concord *Organic Lawn Care* by UMass-Amherst expert Mary Owen

#### **Free Organic Lawn Care Workshops:**

- Mar 5 10am Jones Farm, Rt. 27, Chelmsford
- Mar 19, 10am Eric's Greenhouse, 68 Boston Rd.
- March 26, 10am Parlee's Pine Hill Nursery, 160 Pine Hill Rd., Chelmsford
- Apr 2, TBA Cataldo Nurseries, 41 Robinson Rd., Littleton
- Apr 9, 10am Butterbrook Organic Farms, Rt 27, Acton

#### **Water Department Open House**

May 4 5:30 to 7:30pm 60 Forge Village Rd, Westford