Spring 2021

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Letter From the President
by Ryan Reischick

Greetings!

What a year it has been. I never could have imagined that last year would have turned out the way that it did. A lot has changed in our daily lives, and now hopefully we are on a path back to normal. I really missed not getting to go to convention this year. It’s always nice to talk to everyone and catch up with what is going on.

The association is planning on the return of the summer picnic this summer. It will be held again in Falls City the weekend of June 18-20. That same weekend there is also a Hot Air Balloon Festival in Falls City. We are planning on that for the Saturday evening festivities. It will be something new and is a lot of fun. Please make plans to bring your families or come alone, and I hope to see you all for a fun weekend.

Sincerely,

Ryan Rieschick

Hyperlinks added to Digital Version of Water Writes

“Hyperlink- A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, allowing users to click their way from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don’t have to be. When you move the cursor over a hyperlink, whether it is text or an image, the arrow should change to a small hand pointing at the link. When you click it, a new page or place in the current page will open.” – Christensson, P. (2006). Hyperlink Definition. Retrieved 2021, Apr 22, from https://techterms.com

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We want to thank all our advertisers; you help make the Water Writes Publication the magazine that it is.
Shifting Thinking in Well Cleaning and Maintenance

The key to success is focusing on removal of plugging material and reversing formation damage.

By Neil Mansuy

Well rehabilitation and maintenance are well known to most working professionals in the groundwater industry.

However, while most people are familiar with these terms and familiar with problems such as lost capacity, red water, water quality changes, and taste and odor issues that wells experience, many people are not familiar with the causes and the effective solutions.

I think it is important to establish that my educational background is groundwater microbiology, and the focus of my graduate degree was on the factors that cause well plugging, with a primary focus on iron bacteria. The groundwater industry has been focused on iron bacteria as the primary cause of water well problems.

But after working the past 40 years with a primary focus on well rehabilitation, I have come to recognize we have focused too much on the bacterial component of incrustation.

Groundwater Microbiology

Numerous bacteria that are naturally present and will never be eliminated from subsurface environments are growing mostly attached to surfaces in biofilms and are involved in the oxidation and filtering of dissolved minerals in the groundwater. The fact that most microorganisms in water well environments are attached to surfaces is one of the reasons I have zero confidence in bacterial numbers that come from pumped water samples.

We are also not able to satisfy the nutritional requirements of most microorganisms when relying on growth to enumerate the bacterial numbers. There are other procedures that are more accurate in enumerating total bacterial numbers but are still dependent upon detachment.

Investigations of microbiology of the deep subsurface have demonstrated that naturally occurring microorganisms are present at a billion bacteria per gram of soil. One study undertaken by the Department of Energy in the mid-1980s, where four wells were drilled in South Carolina to almost 2000 feet below surface, demonstrated that the billion bacteria per gram were present independent of depth.

Samples taken during drilling in the oil industry have shown similar numbers much deeper. One of the findings that surprised the researchers at the time was the occurrence of total coliforms in abundance coming from the deepest samples.

WELL CLEANING Continued on page 15
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Over the past year-and-a-half, we have all experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in our own professional and personal lives, and under varied circumstances. Yet these challenges have continuously been met with resiliency. Along with resiliency, comes benevolence and grace.

Therefore, we want to genuinely express our sincere gratitude and give our personal thanks to all the instructors, vendors, and financial contributors who made the Continuing Education classes a reality in an often, unreal world. This type of undertaking took folks who put others above themselves and gave of their time, talents, and financial resources to keep this whole year together in lieu of meeting in person to fulfill Continuing Education credits. Thank you so much for making the seemingly impossible ... possible!

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Thank you to our current Members and a special welcome to those who want to join our ranks...

The following companies, organizations, and individuals listed below are current paid 2021 members of the Nebraska Well Drillers Association. It is with great honor and distinction that we thank our current members for their participation in the Association and for their leadership in the water well profession that makes Nebraska proud. It is without question, that the past year-and-a-half has been challenging, yet as Nebraskans, we find creative ways to get things resolved. Thank you for your perseverance, your patience, your courage, and your leadership!

If you do not see your name on this list and you and your organization would like to become a member of the Nebraska Well Drillers Association, please contact Jason Orton at jason@h2oboy.net or complete the application on page 3.
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Causes of Well Problems
Once incrustation becomes extensive enough, it can cause loss of capacity, increased electric cost of pumping water, and a variety of water quality changes. When the pumping water level gets much lower in the well, the increased cost of pumping water can be significant as electric costs are increasing significantly.

The cost of rehabilitation can often be recovered from restoring production, resulting in a higher pumping water level inside the well and decreased electric cost to pump the same amount of water. The focus on the bacterial component when wells are cleaned or rehabilitated leads us astray from the more important component of plugging material.

Approximately 90% of deposited material are the minerals that have come out of solution from the groundwater. The mineral loading or dissolved minerals of groundwater is determined by the formation geology from a weathering process.

With a focus on the bacterial component, approaches that are taken for rehabilitation are often not effective at removing the mineral component. If chemical rehabilitation is chosen for the bacterial component, such as disinfectants and organic acids, they are often too weak to dissolve, disrupt, and remove the 90% component of mineral scale.

It has long been believed that the iron bacteria or the biofilms are difficult to penetrate and remove due to the extracellular polysaccharide often referred to as bacterial slime. This belief originated from the focus on bacteria and that bacteria were responsible for most lost capacity in wells.

Therefore, disinfectants were often chosen and when the deposited material was not removed, and capacity was not restored, it was believed that the bacteria (biofilms) were difficult to remove. The biofilms are easily disrupted and removed, and the reason that results of restoring capacity was not achieved is there was nothing to remove the mineral scale.

I no longer believe it is important to kill bacteria or focus on disinfection when rehabilitating wells because of the understanding that we will never sterilize an aquifer or kill all the microorganisms. The key to success is focusing on the removal of plugging material (mineral scale) and reversing the formation damage in the formation and the filter pack.

Formation damage caused by invasion of the pore space in the near-well environment by silt, clay, and fine sand is often underestimated because we cannot see it with video inspection of wells. And we tend to blame everything on what we can see, such as biofouling and the associated minerals.

Well Hydraulics Related to Rehabilitation and Maintenance
The most important factor in understanding well problems and well solutions is well hydraulics.

Well hydraulics refers to how water flows towards an operating well. A water well works as a blending unit from variation of flow from different zones within the well. Many thousands of production profiling have been performed on wells and demonstrated there is significant variation in where water is being produced in an operating well.

With pumping equipment most often in the upper casing, most of the water is being produced from the upper part of a well (screened or open hole) and often little water is being produced from lower zones in a well. This can result in low flow zones or stagnant zones existing in the well.

These stagnant zones can result in water quality issues and the inability to flush the bottom part of a well. Variation in production with depth and the change in where water is coming from in an operating well can result in water quality changes if there is variation in quality with depth. This change in the production profile is a result of plugging of the most productive zones of the well.

Time-Based Preventive Well Maintenance
The most significant thing learned during the past 40 years is that we have historically waited too long before we undertake a cleaning event (rehabilitation or preventive maintenance cleaning) on a well. The most significant reason we wait too long is our reliance on monitoring specific capacity (Q/s). We have historically used loss of 15%-20% specific capacity that would trigger a rehabilitation or preventive maintenance cleaning. We do not detect the early loss of pore volume by monitoring specific capacity.

There is a lot of extra pore space that exists when wells are newly constructed. There is also extra production capacity in other zones within a well that can make up losses that occur in productive zones without any loss in specific capacity.

If specific capacity is being monitored, a measured loss in specific capacity occurs at a single moment in time. The single moment in time occurs when the excess pore space and the extra production from mostly deeper zones is plugged and the remaining pore transitions from laminar to turbulent flow.

We then experience turbulent flow losses that can be measured during a flow test. When we wait for loss of specific capacity, the plugging material can become more extensive and can also become more mineralized, thus making it more difficult to remove.

I have come to recognize we must establish time-based rehabilitation and maintenance. As previously discussed, plugging material is mostly biological filtration of minerals and therefore the early stages of accumulated material feature softer slimy material with the beginning of mineral content and can generally be easily removed. The frequency of preventive maintenance cleaning is mostly annual and sometimes more frequent, depending upon the rate of plugging.

WELL CLEANING Continued on page 17
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for all the latest information relating to the Annual Convention and other upcoming Association sponsored events.

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From the graph above, we see the typical operate to failure mentality versus annual preventive maintenance. The cost of an annual cleaning generally ranges from 10%-20% of a full rehabilitation. My confidence is with the use of gaseous and liquid carbon dioxide with the use of the Aqua Gard® Preventive Maintenance Technology. This allows the well to be cleaned effectively with pumping equipment in place.

Injection of carbon dioxide into the deepest point in a well allows the limitation of well hydraulics to be overcome. Injection of carbon dioxide in a sealed well allows the cleaning energy inside the well to penetrate the filter pack or fractures of rock wells and the surrounding formation.

The downtime for a well with a preventive maintenance cleaning is generally less than 24 hours. Another advantage of gaseous and liquid carbon dioxide makes it easy to comply with discharge permits without the need to neutralize chemicals.

**Steps for Effective Rehabilitation**

There are many different technologies and procedures that are used to rehabilitate wells. The steps taken in the cleaning process are targeting the removal of biological and associated minerals as well as removing the invasion of fines and the formation damage. Well rehabilitation has become well known and somewhat mature in the groundwater industry. Most professionals in the industry have recognized the importance of a multiple-step approach to cleaning wells. Each step is important in better cleaning of wells. A common stepwise process is:

- Pre-rehabilitation flow test.
- Pulling pumping or injection equipment.
- Pre-rehabilitation video inspection.
- Pre-treatment of the inside of the well with wire brushing, swabbing, jetting, or percussive energy. Pre-treatment is the easiest part of a well system to clean.
- The next step is the main part of the well rehabilitation or cleaning process that must penetrate the surrounding formation with effective energy.

There are many different things that can be used for this part of the rehabilitation process. Some of these can include chemicals or chemical blends, jetting procedures of various pressure ranges, hydrofracturing, percussive explosives and compressed gases, the use of gaseous and liquid carbon dioxide (Aqua Freed®) mostly without chemicals. Being in the industry a long time and experience with all the technologies, my confidence is with the use of carbon dioxide that has been used on many thousands of wells around the world.

- The development step follows the major cleaning process and is one of the most important steps because all of the material that has been loosened up has to be removed.

It is often not as simple as pumping a well even above the design rate since the limitation of achieving high velocity conditions over the entire producing interval of the well. The most effective method of the development step is simultaneous swabbing with a double-disk swab and pumping with airlifting or pump, depending upon static water level.

The double-disk swab consists of a perforated section between an upper swab and a lower swab. The distance between the swabs can range from a few feet to 20 feet. One important component of the simultaneous swabbing and airlifting is the movement of the swabbing tool up and down inside the well while pumping water. The speed at which this tool moves is important, and the effectiveness is achieved by the displacement of the swabs moving up and down as a plunger at the same time achieving higher velocity of water within the isolated section.

- Post-rehabilitation video inspection.
- Installation of pumping or injection equipment. Wells are often equipped with Aqua Gard while the pumping equipment is being installed.
- Post-rehabilitation flow test.

The groundwater industry has finally made a paradigm shift from operate to failure to more effective asset management. The source is the most important asset in a groundwater system. More demand on groundwater supplies, the increasing cost of pumping water, and decreasing budgets make water well rehabilitation and maintenance much more important.

Removal of plugging material when it is soft in nature and not extensive allows water quality to be more consistent in production, and to be maintained at a higher discharge rate, a higher pumping water level, and lower electric cost.

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Executive Director's Notes

by Lee Orton

Welcome to what we hope will be a slow but steady return to what was in the past. This issue of *Water Writes* is especially directed at the THANK YOU’S that we need to bestow on all of our water well profession who helped to make the time we are now moving forward from.

All of our past members and many new members who joined to take advantage of the online learning we have been able to provide when we could not get together face to face are to be thanked. A list of Association members is in this issue of *Water Writes*. Say thanks to all of those members and ask yourself, if you are not on that list, why not? Time to join and be a part of your successful organization.

Also, a list of your support organizations who contributed funds and their time to help to make our online learning effort a success is in this issue of *Water Writes*. Say thanks to them and remember to use them for all of your needs in business.

Next, we are already beginning to plan for the 2022 Annual Water Industries Convention and Trade Show in Kearney, Nebraska. You can mark your calendar for February 2022 and expect an even more exciting event in a brand new convention hotel and convention center. Plans will be announced later this year.

In the meantime, your Association Executive Board of Directors is planning to return to Falls City for a final President’s event on June 19, 2021. It appears that the Falls City Balloon Celebration will be included in the Board meeting and social functions hosted by President Ryan Rieshick. Details and arrangements will be available to our members soon.

Finally, this year has been a trying year for your Association staff and leadership. We have worked closely with the Department of Environment and Energy and its leadership to assure that the legislative transition to their Department from our past long history with the Department of Health and Human Services was smooth and without any significant changes in the work of our very successful Water Well Standards and Contractors’ Licensing Board and programs. Success has been proven with already two good meetings of the Board with NDEE leadership. We will continue to work closely with that transition to assure that our water well professionals will see a “seamless” change and perhaps some great new things coming in the future.

Thanks to you all! There is no better time to say Thank You to all who made this strange year as successful as possible. If you are not currently a member...join today! Be a part of the Water Well Profession Association going forward!
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