## Introduction

Public drinking water supplies have always been instrumental in the development of a community. Throughout history, the importance of a safe, adequate source of water has been acknowledged, as evidenced by Governor Gage of Jamestown, Virginia in 1610 when he proclaimed:

“There shall be no man or woman dare to wash any unclean linen, wash clothes, nor rinse or make clean any kettle, pot or pan, or any suchlike vessel within twenty feet of the old well or new pump. Nor shall anyone aforesaid within less than a quarter mile of the fort, dare to do the necessities of nature, since by these unmanly, slothful, and loathsome immodesties, the whole fort may be choked and poisoned.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Today, many municipalities and water suppliers such as HWW are primarily responsible for protecting the drinking water source for their communities. Many utilities and public water suppliers use various tools to protect the water source including public awareness and education. HWW recognizes that its efforts to protect the watershed area would not be completely effective unless the local community is educated in water resource protection and the potential impacts from their actions. HWW is committed to support environmental awareness and educational campaigns to inform the public of watershed management practices. Public awareness and understanding will assist in the protection of the watershed areas. In addition, protecting water at its source is much more cost effective than constructing treatment facilities with advanced processes to treat the water supply. By promoting public awareness for proper watershed management, the water source will be protected for future generations, and costly construction of additional treatment, including filtration, can be postponed.

## Public Awareness Program Goals

The goals of the public awareness program are summarized as follows:

1. Educate the public regarding the purposes and goals of HWW with regard to its watershed management program so that the public will better understand the importance of watershed protection and the potential cost associated with the construction of additional treatment, including potential filtration.
2. Gain support for the implementation of the watershed management programs adopted by the Board of Water Commissioners and HWW so that implementation of these programs will avoid public opposition.
3. Improve the understanding of technical aspects of watershed management and water treatment to the general public, particularly the new corrosion control/disinfection treatment facility.
4. Understand the broad range of public issues and concerns regarding watershed protection so that HWW can better integrate the concerns of the public into protection strategies for maintaining watershed integrity.

## Educational Programs

HWW’s public awareness program is summarized as follows:

1. HWW has purchased watershed protection and water quality videos that are available to be used in school educational programs and/or broadcast on the public access television network. The material on the videos is geared toward the general public.
2. As part of its annual water system report, which is directly mailed to all HWW customers, the HWW includes information on watershed protection, activities within the watershed, and planned capital improvements.
3. Holyoke Water Works offers tours of the corrosion control/disinfection treatment facility to educate the public about water treatment and watershed protection. Following the tour, a portion of the watershed is walked with HWW operations personnel who explain the importance of watershed protection.
4. In May 1999, the HWW developed a brochure to highlight the purpose, treatment processes, and background of the Water Treatment Facility. These brochures are available at the Water Treatment Facility during guided tours. The purpose of the brochures is to educate the general public about the treatment facility.
5. A Water Department official has been designated to contact school system officials in an effort to educate students on watershed protection and other related water quality issues. HWW provides educational material to present to the school system. The video content is selected based on the viewing audience.
6. The Board of Water Commissioners and HWW sponsor a coloring book contest for all second grade students throughout the City during National Drinking Water Week in May. The HWW provides students with activity/coloring books, pencils, crayons, erasers, and stickers and provides teachers with educational videos on the hydrologic cycle, water protection, water conservation, and water treatment processes. Each second grade teacher chooses a winner and runner-up from the completed activity booklets. Winners and runners-up receive gift certificates. All the winners from each second grade classroom are entered into a drawing and one winner is chosen at random to receive for his/her class a tour of the water treatment facility and pizza party, courtesy of the HWW.
7. HWW will investigate the development of a video specific to their watersheds and disinfection/corrosion control facility.

The implementation schedule for the public awareness program is summarized as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action Items** | **Implementation Schedule** |
| Purchase and make available AWWA videos for presentation on the public access channel | Ongoing |
| Treatment plant tours | Ongoing |
| Develop brochures | Brochure was developed in May 1999 and is distributed during treatment plant tours or upon request. |
| Appoint school liaison; Contact and provide educational material to the school system. | School liaison has been appointed |

To date, the primary focus of the youth education program has been on the second grade classes. HWW is considering changing the focus of the program to students in Grades 4-6 and is evaluating how to modify the program accordingly.

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *State Source Water Assessment And Protection Programs Guidance*. EPA 816-R-97-007. Draft document. April 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)