



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection State Well Drillers and Pump Installers Examining and Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for July 17, 2025

Approved by the Board on August 21, 2025

Board Members Participating Via Telephone/Microsoft Teams: Art Becker (Chairman), Gary Poppe (Vice-Chairman), Dave Lyman, Joe Yost, Gordon Craig, Mike Klaser, and Alexandra Carone

Board Members Absent: Steve Domber and Richard Dalton

Board Legal Representative Present: Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jill Denyes, NJ Division of Law

NJDEP Water Supply (Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting) Staff Present: Steve Reya, Mark Miller, Mark Ortega, Jeremy Wick, Steve Vargo, Jillian Walker, and Renato Mendez

Other NJDEP Staff Present: Don Hirsch, Northern Water Compliance and Enforcement

Members of the Public: N/A

1. Call to Order and Introductions-

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 am with a quorum present via Microsoft Teams and telephone. Notice of the meeting and instructions on how to participate by video or phone were listed on the Board's website.

2. Review and Certification of June 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes-

A. Becker asked if anyone had any comments on the draft minutes from the June 19, 2025 Board meeting. No comments were made.

A motion to approve the draft minutes from June 19, 2025 was made by G. Poppe and seconded by J. Yost. All were in favor except for M. Klaser, who abstained due to being absent for the June meeting.

3. Review of License Applicants-

A. Becker summarized the list of license applications provided by the Department. He stated that one Pump Installer (PI) and one Environmental Resource & Geotechnical (ERG) license application, which were approved by the Department, were on the list. He asked if anyone had any comments on the license applications. No comments were made.

A motion to approve the license applicants was made by G. Craig, seconded by D. Lyman, and approved unanimously.

Below is a list of license applicants approved for licensure:

License Type	Applicant Name	Employer
PI	James D. Fenton	Al's Water Pump Inc.
ERG	Eric M. Rundstrom	ConeTec, Inc.

4. Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting (Bureau) Enforcement & Field Work Update-

S. Vargo started the update by going over field work. Three site visits were conducted by Bureau staff since the last enforcement update. The first site visit was to see an irrigation well in Gloucester County in response to a condition on the well permit requiring that the driller notify the Bureau at least three (3) full work days prior to the start of drilling to allow for inspection and oversight of the well installation. As noted during previous meetings, these are regularly placed on well permits. The driller experienced some equipment issues, but the well drilling went well otherwise. The next site visit was to see the installation of outer casing for a double cased well in an area of saltwater intrusion. This visit was a follow-up to the failed installation of this well in July 2024. Installation of the outer casing went smoothly. The following week, Bureau staff witnessed the re-drilling of another double cased well at the home across the street. This well was part of an ongoing enforcement issue where the drillers had originally used bentonite grout to seal the annulus of the well instead of the required cement-based grout mix in a saltwater environment. The drillers successfully pulled out the well casing, re-drilled the borehole, and re-installed the well using a cement-based grout. At this time, it was discovered the homeowner of the well installation from the week prior had cut down the above grade casing and installed a pump himself, which constituted unlicensed work.

Three notices of non-compliance (NONCs) have been issued since the last enforcement update. Two of the NONCs were issued to a licensed pump installer for not bringing below grade installations up to code when performing pump work. This individual responded to the NONCs and has complied. The third NONC was issued to the homeowner mentioned above who performed unlicensed pump work and modification of his well. The Bureau has prepared fourteen more NONCs to send next month.

M. Miller continued the update by discussing the Bureau's ongoing efforts to have drillers with outstanding well records submit the documentation to the Department for review. Two letters requesting submittal of outstanding well records were issued earlier this year to two drilling companies. Both companies failed to comply with the request and referrals were sent to both Northern and Southern Water Compliance and Enforcement (Enforcement). The Bureau will be sending more of these notices to other drilling companies in the near future.

M. Miller then provided an update on the open well brought to the attention of the Board and the Bureau during the public comments section of the June 19 meeting by A. Becker. M. Miller started by saying during the June 19 meeting he had stated a letter had been sent by the Department to the well

owner requesting the well head be fixed, but upon review of Bureau records, it was discovered that the letter had never been sent. Following the June 19 meeting, a letter was sent to the well owner, and they have responded and will be hiring a New Jersey licensed well driller to bring the well to compliance.

A. Becker thanked the Bureau for continued efforts with enforcement action. A. Becker then brought up the impending end to the current license renewal cycle, and how he hopes licensees with outstanding NONCs, especially licensees who had outstanding NONCs during the last license renewal in 2023, will not be able to continue to renew their license. A. Becker requested an update for the next meeting on licensees who had outstanding NONCs during the last license renewal. S. Reya clarified the outstanding NONCs from that time had been referred to Enforcement but are still in Enforcement's queue. He also noted that the current rule does not have any provision that stipulates that those with violations or final agency actions are not eligible for license renewal. The Bureau members working on the renewal of N.J.A.C. 7:9D Well Construction and Maintenance; Sealing of Abandoned Wells, will be meeting again in the future and will be discussing adding additional language to the rule about conditions for license renewal. A. Becker reminded the Board and Department that license renewal is in June 2026, which is now less than a year away, and the lack of action against drillers with open violations is unfair to drillers who follow the rules.

A. Becker thanked S. Vargo and M. Miller for the enforcement update.

5. Artificial Ground Freeze Pipe Technology and Compliance Advisory-

S. Reya began by stating the Department has been aware of the ground freeze technology for years. The Bureau would occasionally get questions from contractors asking if the installation of ground freeze pipes falls under the N.J.A.C. 7:9D, however, nothing ever became of those projects. Recently, a contractor did a large ground freeze project in Mercer County without licensed well drillers, well permits, or proper decommissioning of the bores the ground freeze pipes were removed from.

Following this event, the Department authored an Artificial Ground Freezing Technology Compliance Advisory letter, which was shared with the Board. The advisory letter was also distributed to the Department's New Jersey licensed well driller and pump installer and Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSRPs) email distribution lists. The advisory was distributed to New Jersey LSRPs, as companies conducting ground freezing work may not be based in New Jersey and therefore may not be familiar with New Jersey's well regulations.

D. Lyman asked what type of casing is installed in these wells and S. Reya explained the construction. D. Lyman asked what happens with what is pumped into the ground for freezing after the project has ended and S. Reya clarified these are in a closed system and nothing is being injected into the ground. D. Lyman followed up by asking if these would be considered Category 3 Cased Environmental Resource and Geotechnical wells, and S. Reya confirmed for this project they would be.

M. Klaser brought up how ensuring conduits to groundwater are not left open upon completion of a project is part of an LSRP's responsibility and asked if the Department had reached out to or issued a violation to the LSRP for the site. S. Reya confirmed that the Department has been in contact with the site's LSRP and that the advisory was distributed to the Department's LSRP email distribution list. S. Reya thanked the Board for their input on the situation.

6. Well Casing Repair Methods Using Swage Liner Patches-

S. Reya introduced the topic, explaining that swage liners are typically used to patch holes in the casing of a well. The liner is a corrugated stainless steel that is lowered into place and then expanded to be flush with the well casing. The Department's previous involvement with swage liners involved patching holes in the inner casing of multi cased wells and closing off portions of the well screen. The benefits of swage liners over typical well liners are that the well diameter does not need to be altered and therefore pump capacity does not need to be reduced, the well is ultimately easier to decommission, and swage liners are less costly to the well owner.

S. Reya then shared before and after videos with the Board of a recent swage liner installation to the outer casing of a well in Camden County. The well had a hole in its outer casing, allowing a high-pressure stream of water into an upper portion of the well, above the screened aquifer and static water level. A five-foot section of swage liner was installed over the hole, and the video of the inside of the casing after the swage installation shows water still flowing into the well between the casing and the swage liner, appearing as if the liner is not flush with the casing. S. Reya stated he believes more work needs to be done to patch this well casing and asked if the Board has had any experience with swage liners in the past and can provide input on the situation.

J. Yost advised he would not approve this well for use following the repair attempt. Subsequent discussion ensued about how perhaps there should be a rubber seal bonded to the outside of the swage liner, which would help make it better seal against the casing. The swage patch in the video was not comprised with the rubber lining that some swage liners utilize. S. Reya stated the engineer for the job is proposing to add another section of swage liner with the added rubber seal. J. Yost explained that he does not believe the inside of the casing is smooth, as it is from 1974, and he does not think the swage liner patch will work due to this. J. Yost also shared his opinion on when a swage liner should be used, and that it should only be used for inner casings. D. Lyman asked J. Yost if they were to fix this well with a regular liner instead of the swage, if they would still be able to get a sufficient sized pump in the well, which J. Yost stated that he believes they can as they would be able to install a 16" liner in the well. D. Lyman suggested the Department should not approve the use of swage liner to patch a well unless the driller proposing to do the work has proven a regular liner cannot be used instead. D. Lyman also raised concern with the engineer deciding how the well should be constructed instead of the well driller, but S. Reya clarified the Bureau ultimately reviews the licensed driller's proposal, which would accompany a well permit application for the proposed modification to the well. G. Poppe proposed adding language to N.J.A.C. 7:9D about the use of swage liners, and A. Becker and D. Lyman agreed with this suggestion.

7. Grout Settlement & Verification of the Presence of Grout in Wells-

S. Vargo presented the topic by giving a summary of an issue the Bureau has been seeing with grout settlement. Recently the Bureau has received two phone calls from homeowners regarding the apparent absence of a grout seal around their new wells. Bureau staff went out to inspect both wells, hand augering around the wells in search of the presence of grout and were unable to confirm the presence of grout. NONCs were issued to both drillers and companies of the two wells for insufficient grout seal. S. Vargo wanted the Board to advise on how much grout settlement is normal and how the Bureau can better verify whether there is just grout settlement or if a well has been sealed at all.

A. Becker began by saying N.J.A.C. 7:9D states well drillers are supposed to return to the well site the day after well completion to check for grout settlement and top it off as necessary. The lack of grout at ground surface or the pitless adapter/water line, therefore, would constitute a violation of the rule requirement. G. Poppe added grout settlement can vary in different formations, and it is up to the driller to know which areas should be checked for settlement. A. Becker and J. Yost agreed with the

opinion that settlement varies from formation to formation, but A. Becker added the grout mixes may be watered down too much. D. Lyman asked if the wells were open hole rock wells or screened wells and S. Vargo confirmed they are both screened wells in unconsolidated formations. D. Hirsch inquired whether N.J.A.C. 7:9D specifies grout should be at ground level and S. Reya clarified the rule says, "The grout mixture shall be brought up to ground level; to displace all water and materials in the annular space." [N.J.A.C. 7:9D-2.10(c)3] S. Reya mentioned when the Bureau sends NONCs to drillers for this type of violation, the response is usually that the well was grouted but settled afterwards, but it is hard for Bureau staff to know if that is true or if the well was not properly grouted upon initial installation.

S. Vargo stated the Bureau is not sure in which instances the homeowner should be advised to have their well driller come back out to the well to "top off" the grout around the casing or if the complaint should result in enforcement action. G. Poppe noted the local health inspectors should be responsible for checking wells are grouted during or after drilling activities, and that some counties do have health inspectors inspect wells while others do not. D. Lyman said health inspectors in northern counties require grout visible at grade as part of their inspection of the well. J. Yost suggested the Department should request town and county health inspectors to inspect new wells. A. Becker stated the well drillers involved should receive three-day notices on their next well permits so Bureau staff can witness them grouting a well. J. Yost pointed out that most residential wells are completed in one day, which means well drillers are not coming back to the well the next day to check for settlement, even though the rule requires them to do so.

D. Lyman asked how the homeowners knew something was wrong with their wells and S. Vargo clarified one had a void forming next to their well and the other could move their well in the ground. S. Reya thanked everyone for their feedback on the matter.

8. Program Updates-

There were no new program updates.

9. New Business/Public Comments-

A. Becker inquired about the open well he had previously brought up in the Public Comments section of the June 19 meeting, and M. Miller reiterated the update on the well given during the Enforcement and Field Work Update portion of this meeting. A. Becker stated he would stop by the location of the violation and provide an update at the next meeting.

10. Adjournment-

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21, 2025.

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:53 am was made by G. Poppe, seconded by D. Lyman and approved unanimously.