Citizens’ Letter to the Town Councils of Orono and Veazie Concerning Our Need for Improved Water Quality and Improved Management of Our Water District

October 15th, 2014

Dear Orono and Veazie Town Councils,

In the last year a citizens’ action group has been formed to advocate for improved water quality in Orono and Veazie. Our efforts stem from two concerns: first, the fact that for the last decade, the water provided to us by the Orono Veazie Water District (OVWD) has repeatedly registered above EPA limits for certain chemical compounds, some of which are known carcinogens; and second, the OVWD and members of its board have failed to communicate with the public and to develop a comprehensive plan to substantially improve the quality of our water. We seek to be courteous and constructive in our feedback, but to date none of our efforts have resulted in substantive change. As a result, we see a clear need to move to the next level in our efforts, and we are asking you for your support as the entities that appoint the OVWD board members and represent us, its stakeholders.

The Science Behind Our Unhealthy Water

On October 5th of this year, our citizens action group held an informational meeting. Over seventy members of the public attended. Doctor Jean MacRae, associate professor of environmental engineering at the University of Maine, gave a talk entitled “Disinfection Byproducts (THM).” Dr. MacRae explained the formation of trihalomethanes (THMs) and haloacetic acid (HAA) in our water, their impact on human health at current concentrations, and detailed options for remediation, both in homes and at the District level. We were particularly concerned to learn that people of low body weight, namely young children, are at higher risk of suffering adverse health effects due to these chemical byproducts of chlorination. Please see the technical appendix at the end of this letter for further information and a report by Dr. MacRae.

The Need for Improved Management and Planning

Though we are seriously concerned about our water’s high levels of unhealthy chemical compounds, we are equally concerned with the OVWD’s failures of management. These include failures to communicate with the public and to develop a comprehensive plan for improved water quality.
As water users and stakeholders, we expect but have not witnessed the following from the OVWD and its board of trustees:

1. A current and publicly-available comprehensive water management plan, including plans to reduce our water’s levels of chlorine byproducts to those of surrounding towns, not simply to levels that barely pass EPA health limits.
2. Board meeting agendas and minutes that acknowledge water quality challenges and reflect efforts at remediation.
3. Concerted and ongoing efforts to communicate and engage with the District’s stakeholders, the public.

Our position is that the OVWD and a majority of its board suffer from systemic management problems that prevent critical progress and solutions and insulate them from public concern.

What We Need from the Orono and Veazie Town Councils

We share with you a desire to communicate with the OVWD in a constructive and courteous manner. Unfortunately, it appears that courtesy and cooperation on our part will simply lead to another decade of unhealthy water, no comprehensive plan, and more dismissal of public concerns. This is unacceptable. As a result, we request that the Town Councils of Orono and Veazie consider the following:

- Invite the OVWD superintendent and board members who disagree with the four community expectations stated above to resign.
- Require public vetting for all new appointments and reappointments of Water District board members. The review committee could include a voting member of the public sitting at the table with the Town Council.
- Pursue a change in the OVWD charter to implement direct municipal oversight or board member elections to ensure management responsiveness to public concerns. We

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1 Please note that some board members have made efforts to improve communication with the public and to make long-range plans, in spite of discouragement from their peers.
2 In response to questions about the lack of a comprehensive plan, the District has cited a plan drafted in the 1970s, in spite of the fact that they are unable to find it.
3 In 2013, Bangor and Brewer had THM levels averaging 40 times lower than Orono and Veazie’s and Old Town had levels averaging six times lower.
4 The September board meeting agenda contained no mention of water quality, in spite of recent test results for HAA5, which were in violation of EPA health limits.
5 Examples of poor communication are countless, but here are a few. (a) The OVWD board declined an invitation from the Veazie Town Council to meet with them publicly in September. (b) In line with several board members’ hostility toward public engagement, the chair commented at their September meeting that public comment is tolerated, but not guaranteed. (c) As with much of their overdue online communication, even one day before the OVWD’s October board meeting, their website listed only the previous meeting.
6 In direct violation of the FOIA, the OVWD has cited the need for confidentiality around land purchases as their reason for not making either their long-range remediation plans available or the report written for them by the engineering consulting group, Wright Pierce, whom they were required by law to hire after violating EPA levels for THMs.
understand that several towns in Maine have recently and successfully adopted this approach.

- Insist that the OVWD and its board establish a process by the end of the calendar year for developing a comprehensive plan that:
  - Is formed by a committee, which includes public stakeholder representation.
  - Reflects a thorough investigation of options available to us, such as:
    - a review of the District’s current water-quality testing methodology relative to flushing, temperature and location within the system.
    - a complete exploration of alternatives for remediation, possibly including quotes and relative certainty of effect.
  - Includes a section describing a process for transparent and thorough financial reporting and public communication.
  - Aims to provide water containing chlorine byproducts at concentrations comparable to those of neighboring towns with superior water quality within a few years.

We request a response on these issues from you, our town councils, within a month. We also request, within that same time period, that these issues appear on the agenda for a future community development meeting. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. We look forward to working with you and supporting you in your efforts to improve our towns’ water quality and the management of our Water District. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

The Orono-Veazie-Water Citizens Action Group (oronoveaziewater.wordpress.com)

1. Katie Quirk, 24 Winterhaven Drive, Orono
2. Erik daSilva, 108 North Main Avenue, Orono
3. Michelle Smith, 9 Frost Lane, Orono
4. Farahad Dastoor, 10 Grove St, Orono
5. Emmanuel Boss, 6 Middle St, Orono
6. Samuel G. Kunz, 8 College Heights, Orono
7. Cami Carter, 8 College Heights, Orono
8. Amanda Olsen, 1 University Place, Orono
9. Sandra Joy, 16 Middle St, Orono
10. David Frankel, 6 Page Place, Orono
11. Brian McGill, 4 Peters St, Orono
12. L. Brian Perkins, 1116 Chase Road, Veazie
13. Stefanie Egenhofer, 26 Grove Street, Orono
14. Timothy Michael Waring, 24 Winterhaven Drive, Orono
15. Emily Jackson Sanborn, 22 Myrtle St., Orono
16. Joan H. Perkins, 1116 Chase Road, Veazie
17. Jeremy Smith, 9 Frost Lane, Orono
18. Gordon Bromley, 16 Noyes Drive, Orono
19. Astrid Lassila Smith, 55 Margin St, Orono
20. Justin Crouse, 10 Willow Drive, Orono
21. Leslie Hudson, 70 Forest Avenue, Orono
22. Laura Leighton, 108 North Main Avenue, Orono
23. Juan Condori, 2 Middle St, Orono
24. Megan Bromley, 16 Noyes Drive, Orono
25. Silvia Nittel, Cromwell Dr, Orono
26. Sonia Franklin, 27 Grove St., Orono
27. John Jemison, 8 University Place, Orono
28. Torsten Hahmann, 38 Grove St., Orono
29. Ann Davidoff, 9 Chestnut Ct., Orono
30. Lois H. Wood, 9 Alumni Drive, #205, Orono
31. Jean MacRae, 10 Grove Street, Orono
32. John M. Halloran, 70 Forest Avenue, Orono
33. Christopher Gerbi, 29 Pond St., Orono
34. Constance Carter, 21 Winterhaven Dr., Orono
35. Kristina Weaver, 6 Cromwell Dr, Orono
36. James A. Franklin, 27 Grove Street, Orono
37. Helen Chaggaris, 38 Grove St., Orono
38. Jonathan Shemwell, 16 Spencer St, Orono
39. Willis Beazley, 222 Forest Ave, Orono
40. Susan J. Wishkoski, 13 Longwood Court, Orono
41. Jennifer Tyne, 6 Frost Lane, Orono
42. Corianne Tatariw, 81 Main Street, Orono
43. Frederic Rondeau, 15 Allen Road, Orono
44. Annie Powers, 178 Main Street, Orono
45. Sian Evans, 1295 State Street, Veazie
46. Lee Karp-Boss, 6 Middle St, Orono
47. Jessica Bloom-Foster MD, 1003 Buck Hill Dr, Veazie
48. Gary H. Brown, 1008 Randolph Drive, Veazie
49. Laura Lommler, 222 Forest Ave, Orono
50. Milos Blagojevic, 32 Myrtle St., Orono
51. Jennifer Farrell, 40 Forest Ave, Orono
52. Meghann Derosier, 20 Crestview Drive, Orono
53. Sandra Feher, 75 Bennoch Rd, Orono
54. Ruth D. Brown, 1008 Randolph Drive, Veazie
55. Laura wood, 77 Bennoch Road, Orono
56. Jenny Shemwell, 16 Spencer St, Orono
57. Jennifer Bovie, 2 Middle St, Orono
58. Natalya Tyutyunnyk, 111 Bennoch Rd., Orono
59. Bonnie Blagojevic, 32 Myrtle St, Orono
60. Nikki Curthoys, 11 Harris Road Apt 32, Orono
61. Joanna Crouse, 10 Willow Drive, Orono
62. Yanlin Ding, 20 Winterhaven Dr, Orono
63. Andrew Tyne, 6 Frost Ln, Orono
64. David Renedo, 14 Winterhaven dr, Orono
65. Pernille Renedo, 14 Winterhaven Dr, Orono
66. Suzanne Malis-Andersen, 24 Silver Ridge, Veazie
67. Michael Sever, 24 Pierce Street, Orono
68. Ellen Mallory, 7 Mountainview Dr., Orono
69. Cathy Brooks, 95 Ridgeview Dr., Veazie
70. Karen Pianka, 5741 Libby Hall, UMaine Campus
71. Emily Hildebrand, 55 Bennoch Road, Orono
72. Laurie E. Hicks, One Tuell Lane, Orono
73. Fred Wlodarski, 6 Riverdale, Orono
74. Stephanie Welcomer, 27 Winterhaven Dr., Orono
75. Christian Kuehne, 5 Fernald Rd, Orono
76. Janet Hamel, 6 Grove St, Orono
77. Deborah Blease, 29 Broadway, Orono
78. Eva Szillery, 19 Lexington Rd, Orono
79. James M Jackson Sanborn, 22 Myrtle St, Orono
80. Jeffrey Hooke, 6 Grove St., Orono
81. Karpagavalli Vel, 115 Ridgeview Dr, Veazie
82. Gary Furbish, 87 North Main Avenue, Orono
83. Joan Furbish, 87 North Main Avenue, Orono
84. Roger James Haviland King, 1 Tuell Lane, Orono
85. Xiumei Fang, 18 Sunrise Terrace, Orono
86. Senthil Vel, 115 Ridgeview Dr, Veazie
87. Shirly Stephen, 1, Colburn Drive, Unit-19, Orono
88. Haixuan Zou, 18 Sunrise Terrace, Orono
89. Seong Park, 18 Chapel Road, Orono
90. Cynthia Martinez-Edgar, 16 Harrison Ave., Orono
91. Eric Gallandt, 7 Mountain View Drive, Orono
92. Karl Kreutz, 3 Frost Lane, Orono
93. Carol Brooks, 14 Frost Lane, Orono
94. Suzanne Ambrose-Thomas, 14 Elm Street, Orono
95. Mariusz Potocki, 7 Gilbert St., Orono
96. Terry Porter, 15 Grove St., Orono
97. Venice Bayrd, 19 Noyes Dr., Orono
98. Betty Ingraham, 3 Chapel Road, Orono
99. Amy Sherman, 4 Briarwoid Circle, Orono
100. Barbara Cole, 4 Erin Place, Orono
101. Kelly Ann Ilsman, 32 Forest Avenue, Orono
102. Paul Dupuis, 38 Thompson Rd, Veazie
103. Diane Khiel, 1 Cromwell Drive, Orono
104. Krista A. Capps, 1 Colburn Dr., 15, Orono
105. Scott James Merrill, 1316 Black Bear Lane, Apt 1316, Orono
106. Nelson Meaker, 23 Cromwell Drive, Orono
107. Ellen Meaker, 23 Cromwell Drive, Orono
108. Jonathan Herland, 8 Briarwood Circle, Orono
109. Jerry Khiel, 1 Cromwell Drive, Orono
110. Rick Gwinn, 10 Chapel Road, Orono
111. Teresa Wlodarski, 6 Riverdale, Orono
112. David Hiebeler, 20 Winterhaven Drive, Orono
113. Karen Keim, 28 Arbor Drive, Veazie
114. Dorothy Klimis-Zacas, PhD, 35 Sunrise Terrace, Orono
115. Richard Hollinger, 48 Mill St., Orono
116. Erika Dixon, 15 Mayo Street, Orono
117. Surah T. Whelan, 80 Forest Avenue, Orono
118. Louise Jolliffe, 16 Mayo St., Orono
119. Ellen W. White, 25 University Place, Orono
120. Kate Crane, 3 Edgewood Drive, Orono
121. Sandra Hutchison, 48 Mill St., Orono
122. Janette Landis, 20 Page Place, Orono
123. Jennifer Jain, 30 College heights, Orono
124. Clarissa Henry, 17 College Hts, Orono
125. Nives Dal Bo’-Wheeler, 78 N. Main Ave, Orono
126. Tanja Agrarwal, Riverdale Drive, Orono
127. Christopher Nashi, 2 Edgewood Drive, Orono
128. Candi Ewer, 31 Penobscot Street, Orono
129. Jodi Clayton, 24 Crosby St., Orono
130. Christine Lommler, 42 4th, Orono
131. Catherine Robertson, 37 Broadway, Orono
132. Michael Hahn, 83 Park Street, Orono
133. Wendy Neary, 1 Edgewood Drive, Orono
134. Alice R. Kelley, 121 North Main Ave., Orono
135. Zackary James Davis, 5702 Patch Hall, UMaine Campus
136. Evan McLean, 309 Patch Hall, UMaine Campus
137. Connor Scott, 81 College Ave, Orono
138. Grant Mullen, 56 Park Street, Apartment 2, Orono
139. Joseph Timothy Kelley, 121 North Main Avenue, Orono
140. Tarynne Scott, 421 Knox Hall, UMaine Campus
141. Morgan Connolly, 5 Page Place, Orono
142. Miltiades Zacas, 35 Sunrise Terrace, Orono
143. David and Roberta Townsend, 1 Page Place, Orono
144. Barry Hammer, 15 Downeast Terrace, Apt. 2, Orono
145. Cynthia Blease, 34 Grove St., Orono
146. Eloise Melcher, 5783 Kennebec Hall, UMaine Campus
147. Sandra Johnson, 97 Bennoch Road, Orono
148. Lindsay Waller, 12 Cameo Drive, Orono
149. August J. DeSiervo, 11 Lexington Road, Orono
150. Katrina Daigle, 102.5 North Maine Ave, Orono
151. Gabriella Sanchez, 11 Black Bear Lane Apt. 1121, Orono
152. Gwendelyn Hill, 209 Penobscot Hall, UMaine Campus
153. Abigail Lochala, Main St. Orono, ME, Orono
154. Eilish Marquart, 158 Stillwater Avenue, Orono
Marie-Cecile Gruselle, 5 Fernald Rd, Orono
Amanda Clark, 2 Edgewood Drive, Orono
Anne Ehringhaus, 17 Margin Street, Orono
William Diggins, 5 Page Place, Orono
Aina Crouch, 3 Founders Place, Apt 1e, Orono
Julie Clifford, 102.5 North Maine Ave, Orono
Leah Bilyk, 3 Gardner Rd., Orono
Paige Lewis, 106 1/2 North Main, Orono
Roberto Lopez-Anido, 9 Edgewood Dr., Orono
Kaitlyn Feeney, 1 Timberview Drive, Orono
Hannah Bunnell, 371 Main Street, Orono
Patricia Counihan, 1268 Chase Rd., Veazie
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Gary Brooks, 95 Ridgeview Drive, Veazie
Geoffrey Wingard, 19 Cromwell Drive, Orono
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Susan Smith, 56 N. Main, Orono
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Lars Soderberg, 48 Forest Avenue, Orono
Douglas Allen, 6 Charles Street, Orono
Glenn Rampe MD, 21 Edgewood Drive, Orono
Nancy Rampe, 21 Edgewood Dr., Orono
Dustin Sleight, 22 Noyes Dr, Orono
Diane McClellan, 21 Grove St., Orono
Sarah Kenney, 19 Page Place, Orono
Katherine Garland, 130 Mill Lane, Clifton
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<td>Jaclyn Masters</td>
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<td>Ann H Kenny</td>
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213. Greg Viola, 932 Grove, Orono
214. Mark C Smith, 160 Ridgeview Dr., Veazie
215. Halle Hegstrom, 160 Ridgeview Dr., Veazie
216. Tristan Smith, 160 Ridgeview Dr, Veazie
217. Connor Smith, 160 Ridgeview Dr, Veazie
218. Sharon Ashworth, 16 Crestview Drive, Orono
219. Sonia Franklin, 27 Grove St., Orono
220. Cathleen Bauschatz, 8 Juniper St., Orono
221. James Jonathan Foster, 1003 Buck Hill Drive, Veazie
222. Chris Cronan, 31 Long Meadow Drive, Veazie
223. Cynthia Merritt, 19 Spencer Street, Orono
224. Rachel Lajoie, 66 Hancock Hall, UMaine Campus
225. Tobias Koffman, 19 Noyes Dr, Orono
226. Brittany Fogarty, 701 Stillwater Ave, Old Town
227. Jereme Frank, 6 North Main Street, Orono
228. Mary L. Knowlton, 40 Kelley Rd., Orono
229. Teresa Montague, 1178 Airline Rd Clifton, Candidate for District 129 (Veazie)
230. Cecile Ferguson, 15 Silver Ridge, Veazie
231. Irja Frank, 30 Grove Street, Orono
232. John A. Blease, 34 Grove St., Orono
233. Brittany Cline, 6 N Main Ave, Apt #1, Orono
234. Laura Lindenfeld, York Village, Building 4, UMaine Campus
235. Thomas True, 89 Laurel Circle, Bangor
236. Edwin Nagy, 2 Woodland Dr, Orono
237. Lise Albert, 42 Penobscot Street, Orono
238. Shira Hollinger, 48 Mill St., Orono
239. Nancy A Hall, 6 Pond St, Orono
240. Sharon & Jason Stoner, 23 Crestview Drive, Orono
241. Jennifer Bonnet, 20 Myrtle St, Orono
242. Kaitlin Flynn, 14 Hamlin St. Apt A, Orono
243. Erin Vinson, 205 Murray Hall, UMaine Campus
244. Kathleen A. Lyons, 6 Page Place, Orono
245. Robert E. Whelan, 80 Forest Ave, Orono
246. Jeremy Johnson, 100 Bennoch Rd, Orono
247. Thane Fremouw, 17 College Hts, Orono
248. Marcus B Hale, 18 Elm Street, Orono
249. Graciela Lopez-Anido, 9 Edgewood Dr., Orono
250. Seanna Annis, 29 Water Street, Orono
251. Gwendolyn Walsh, 94 Old Kents Hill Road, UMaine Campus
252. Jillian Lund, 5731 Hancock Hall, UMaine Campus
253. Taylor Bloedon, 1 College Heights, Orono
254. Charlie Bloedon, 1 College Heights, Orono
255. Amber Mae Oakes, 20 Macmillan Dr, Orono
256. Ethan Tremblay, 1 Colburn Drive, Apt. 14, Orono
257. Christopher Young, 1 Colburn Drive, Orono
258. Leslie Hood, 5702 Baumann-Nelson, UMaine Campus
259. Thomas McOscar, 1 Colburn Dr #14, Orono
260. Hilary Warner-Evans, Colvin Hall, UMaine Campus
261. George Bakajza, 17 Margin Street, Orono
262. Grace Kiffney, 119 Park St., Orono
263. Ashley Ball, 125 Patten Street, Bangor
264. Robyn Pride, 35 Broadway, Orono
265. Danielle Walczak, 17 Peters street, Orono
266. Angela Kohtala, 158 Main Street, Orono
267. Mary Beatham, 1052 Main Street, Veazie
268. Patrick McFarlane, 39 Park St, Orono
269. Kelli Costello, 1122 Buck Hill Drive, Veazie
270. Meagan Ouellette, 36 Kelly Road, Orono
271. Edward N Ashworth, 16 Crestview Drive, Orono
Trihalomethanes (THMs) and haloacetic acids (HAAs) are carcinogenic chlorinated organic compounds that are produced when drinking water containing organic matter is chlorinated. Since monitoring began in 2004, Orono’s water has had an average of 69 ppb total THM, and 28% of samples measured concentrations above the 80 ppb limit. Monitoring for HAAs began this year. Of seven samples taken so far for compliance testing, one was above the 60 ppb limit (40 ppb average). Exposure estimates were calculated for THMs and HAAs and compared to “reference doses” (the maximum dose that is not expected to cause negative health effects over a lifetime of exposure). These estimates ranged from 22% – 57% of the reference dose, with toddlers receiving the highest dose.

Formation of THMs and HAAs depends on the concentration of organic matter in the water, the concentration of chlorine, the length of time they are allowed to react, and the temperature. THMs and HAAs can be minimized in tap water by:

- using source water that is lower in organic matter
- limiting or eliminating chlorination of the water prior to removal of some of the organic matter
- reducing the chlorine concentration in the distribution system
- reducing the residence time of water in the distribution system
- removing THMs and HAAs after formation (at the plant or in water storage tanks)

Some operational changes have been made by the Orono-Veazie Water District to reduce THMs but several other measures could be taken. A long-term plan should be made to assess the costs and benefits of several options and to upgrade the system to improve the quality of water provided to residents over time. For more information, please see my full report at https://oronoveaziewater.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/thm-formation1.pdf.