

History of Raspberry Falls Community's Water Issues

by the Raspberry Falls Homeowners Association

1. As early as 2002, during the development of Raspberry Falls, the Virginia Department of Health notified the County that the wells drilled at Raspberry Falls were highly susceptible to contamination. Neither Loudoun Water nor the Board of Supervisors took appropriate action to adequately equip the Raspberry water treatment facility to assure the long term health and safety of Raspberry Falls residents. In fact, County Staff wrote in correspondence from that time period that it would not be prudent to allow individual septic systems in Limestone Karst which is the geology underlying the Raspberry Falls community. Septic systems were approved by the County for the first 25 homes of Raspberry Falls anyway.
2. Raspberry Falls residents signed a disclosure addendum titled "Raspberry Falls Community Water and Wastewater System Disclosure Addendum" that states only the "operation and maintenance (O&M) costs" of both the Community Water System and Community Wastewater (Sewer) System will be borne by the users of these systems.
3. Between 2002 and 2006, Loudoun Water failed to implement a long term corrective action plan to better protect the drinking water from numerous intermittent spikes of contamination within the community wells.
4. In 2007, Loudoun Water initiated their first consultant studies regarding a microfiltration plant solution for Raspberry Falls. This action made it clear that Loudoun Water knew at this time that Raspberry Falls would need a microfiltration plant as their long term solution.
5. In May 2008, E. coli was detected in the community wells at Raspberry Falls yet again. Still, no substantive remedial action was taken. Residents of Raspberry Falls then began to organize a community advocacy group and demand to be notified immediately by Loudoun Water when contamination was detected. Residents demanded that Loudoun Water issue immediate "Boil Water Notifications" when a water well was shut down due to contamination in the raw water that could not adequately be treated by chlorine alone which was our only defense at that time. Residents also began appearing before the Board of Supervisors during monthly public input sessions voicing their concerns and demanding that action be immediately taken to mitigate this situation. Loudoun Water purportedly performed a number of studies, but neither it, nor the Board of Supervisors, took any substantive action to upgrade the Raspberry Falls water treatment plant.
6. On May 19, 2009, Raspberry Falls highest producing well, Well PW-1, underwent an extensive water testing program but ultimately was not declared to be under the direct influence of surface water ("GUDI"). However, E. coli, coliform and algae continued to be intermittently detected in the regular groundwater testing results.
7. **In December 2009, Loudoun Water bargained away the community's ability to have their developer cover the full capital cost of current water plant upgrades (as well as future capital costs) by instituting an "Improvements Cap" that had the effect of releasing the developer, Van Metre, from any future contribution after the payment of an \$830,000 lump sum.** As a result, we can only assume there was not enough money to cover the cost of upgrading our

water storage tank as promised by Loudoun Water in January 2010 because this was never done. **This major change in the agreement between Loudoun Water and Van Metre was done covertly and without public notification or community input as to the ramifications even though it was clear that this change resulted in shifting the financial burden of implementing a microfiltration plant squarely on the shoulders of residents.**

8. In November 2010, after residents complained to the Virginia Department of Health, Well PW-1 was shut down and characterized as "Groundwater Under the Direct Influence" of surface water or "GUDI." The Raspberry Falls community was once again in a water emergency situation with water restrictions.
9. In January of 2011, nearly three years after E. Coli was first detected, the Board of Supervisors finally held a meeting to discuss the water issues at Raspberry Falls. It directed Loudoun Water to conduct a study to determine a solution. In August of 2011, Loudoun Water concluded its study and provided the Board of Supervisors with two solutions it deemed equally feasible: 1) a membrane treatment facility and 2) connecting Raspberry Falls to the Town of Leesburg water pipeline. Loudoun Water presented these options to the Board of Supervisors at a meeting held on October 3, 2011. Ultimately, based on the Board of Supervisors' comments regarding the pipeline extension, Loudoun Water passed a resolution to proceed with the membrane treatment facility on October 10, 2011.
10. In August 2011, Loudoun Water's temporary solution of a replacement well (Well F) turned out to cost more than \$1 Million dollars to implement and the well was plagued with high-turbidity problems from the time it was turned on. This made it necessary to take Well F offline for remediation until May 2012 when it was returned to service. Of course, the action of taking one of our two major sources of water offline resulted in a state of emergency in the community and water restrictions were again enacted by Loudoun Water.
11. In 2011, after numerous consultant studies, the Loudoun Water Board of Directors finally affirmatively voted to implement a membrane treatment facility solution.
12. Between 2011 and 2013, Loudoun Water did not commence work on the membrane treatment facility solution at Raspberry Falls. To our knowledge, Loudoun Water did not investigate alternative methods of funding our community's water solution either.
13. In June 2014, Raspberry Falls Well PW-2 experienced another raw water high contamination spike and was shutdown during testing for GUDI factors. This was exceptionally difficult as residents had to again endure the implementation of severe water restrictions and were unable to use any outside water for the majority of the Summer 2014.
14. In June 2014, Loudoun Water called Raspberry Falls residents to a community meeting at Tuscarora High School. At that meeting, Fred Jennings told Raspberry Falls residents that a definitive solution (the installation of a temporary membrane microfiltration plant) **would be implemented at the Raspberry Falls water treatment plant.** However, on July 31, 2014, residents were informed that a membrane filtration system would only be installed at the Selma community. Yet again, there is no full-time water solution in place for Raspberry Falls. It is our understanding that the commission permit associated with the Interconnection pipeline between Raspberry and Selma specifies that it only be utilized in emergency situations when

Raspberry's wells are shutdown. This leaves us dependent upon our two undependable wells for an undetermined amount of time.

15. On October 28, 2014, the Loudoun Water Finance Committee decided to remove from consideration the option of folding the community systems into the Loudoun Water Central System and implementing a unified rate structure. They did this without stakeholder input and without consulting the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. We would like Loudoun Water and/or the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to have its legal staff research what counties around Loudoun (and Maryland) have folded their smaller community systems into their central systems and adopted the Single-Tariff Pricing structure involving a unified rate structure.
16. On November 3, 2014, Loudoun Water called yet another community meeting at Smarts Mill Middle School. At this meeting, Fred Jennings told residents that Loudoun Water is considering 2 different solutions including a bifurcated potable/non-potable water solution involving the delivery of potable water via the existing infrastructure and non-potable water via a new piping infrastructure for irrigation system outdoor use only. This option is completely unacceptable to the Raspberry Falls HOA and Raspberry Falls residents because a 400 gallon per day potable water solution will not meet our community's historical peak seasonal demand which is not solely indicative of outside irrigation system usage alone. Additionally, this does not even meet Van Metre and Loudoun Water's original written commitment to homeowners at the time of the purchase of their homes that they would provide 750 gallons of water per day to each home. Further, we feel the implementation of a non-potable water infrastructure will result in an extended delay in our potable water treatment solution.
17. At the November 3, 2014 community meeting, Fred Jennings stated that the water solution for Raspberry Falls will POSSIBLY be installed in 28 months, sometime in 2017. Quite frankly, all Loudoun Water has done thus far is conduct expensive consultant studies that have yielded no results in the past. The fact that they are again commissioning consultant studies does not provide us with assurance that a solution will actually be installed. This is why the Raspberry Falls Homeowners Association and Raspberry Falls residents are now demanding that Loudoun Water implement an interim solution at Raspberry Falls' water treatment plant as they have done for the Selma Estates community.