

Editor:

Nearly a year has passed since Albany County dropped its effort to enforce county zoning laws prohibiting gas stations in the aquifer protection zone.

Local water drinkers may be interested in the following from a February 2020 inspection at AKAL Travel Center, better known as Tumbleweed:

“During the inspection, it was discovered that the owner and/or operator failed to report and investigate a suspected release when a passing ATG [automatic tank gauging] result was not obtained during the months of November 2019, December 2019 and January 2020.”

In short: the automatic tank gauging showed the possibility of a leak, and the owner/operator violated the regulations that require reporting and investigation of a possible leak.

The inspection was conducted by the Underground Storage Tank Program of Wyoming’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which ordered Tumbleweed to conduct a tank tightness test. Fortunately, it passed.

One does not care to think about the possible consequences of three months’ worth of tank leaking for residents of the Laramie Plains subdivision downgradient from Tumbleweed, not to mention the city’s water supply drawn from the aquifer protection zone.

Failure to report and investigate for only one month is a violation of state regulations, let alone three months.

Albany County Clean Water Advocates learned about the violation after writing to DEQ about Tumbleweed’s construction of a new drain alongside the concrete apron covering the fuel storage tanks.

The drain will take anything coming off the apron – rain, snowmelt, spilled fuel – and facilitate its downward travel to our drinking water aquifer. Construction of the drain occurred despite the county’s so-called “moratorium” on development in the aquifer protection zone.

DEQ is responsible only for monitoring the operation of the gas station itself. The responsibility for aquifer protection lies with the county commissioners.

Given that Tumbleweed is operating because the county dropped its enforcement effort, the county now could take preventive action by installing a monitor well in its right-of-way along Bluebird Lane, downgradient of Tumbleweed, to provide early warning of any pollution that could affect private well owners and Laramie’s drinking water supply.

Sarah Gorin

Albany County Clean Water Advocates