

**STATEMENT OF
DAVID P. RICHARDSON,
William P. Kenan Jr., Professor of Chemistry
Williams College
November 30, 2004**

(Professor Richardson can be reached for comment at 597-3201.)

If the confusion and dearth of available information about Williamstown's efforts to build a 16-inch water line down Cold Spring Road to Mount Greylock Regional High School weren't bad enough already, the situation got even worse yesterday. That's when the Town of Williamstown, at long last, made public its copies of reports detailing testing of water samples for perchlorates at MGRHS on its web site.

SEE: http://www.williamstown.net/berkshire_enviolabs.htm

These documents detail perchlorate levels measured for MGRHS water samples from the School's two wells that were collected on three different dates, from April to early October of this year. As has been widely reported and discussed at many meetings, the levels at well one vary from a low of 5 ppb to a high of 11 ppb; those from well two are significantly lower, ranging from 1 to 2.5 ppb.

These numbers have been widely quoted as evidence that the School's water supplies are so polluted with perchlorates that a "crisis" situation exists that can only be resolved by construction of the proposed water line. What has been missing from the record until yesterday is information regarding where the actual water samples were collected in the MGRHS water supply system. The document copies released yesterday specify that all samples were collected at the "tap after the pressure storage tank."

This simple testing detail, which should have been made public months ago, means that it is simply not possible to know precisely where perchlorate contamination is entering the MGRHS water supply!

Although it is true that the wells may be polluted, perchlorates instead may be coming from the storage tank, from the pipes that supply it in the school, or even from those bringing water from the wells. Concluding that the School's wells are polluted with perchlorates on the basis of samples taken after the pressure storage tank is not only logically dubious it is highly irresponsible.

Reasoning like this would never pass the requirements for publication of a scientific study of a pollution problem and it should certainly not form the basis of a town's decision to spend 4 million dollars on a municipal water supply pipe. What is needed is a careful, detailed and complete study of perchlorate contamination in the entire MGRHS water system-beginning with samples drawn directly from the underground aquifers and including all intermediate points all the way to the taps where students get their drinking water.

Professor David Dethier, of the Williams Geosciences Department and myself and Professor John W. Thoman, of the Williams Chemistry Department, have already notified officials at MGRHS that we are willing to plan, organize and execute just such a study, and we stand ready to do so. That this critically important piece of information about water testing at MGRHS has only just now become public is simply outrageous. It is one more sign that the people of Williamstown have not had access to sufficient information to make an informed decision about the water line project.

--- END DOCUMENT ---