



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.
Chief Paul O. Thompson
Chief Beverly Cook
Sub-Chief Michael L. Conners
Sub-Chief Eric Thompson
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information:
Communications Department
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Tel: (518) 358-2272

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Water Treatment Facility Toured by Salmon River Central School Leadership

Considered As Future Water Source for School

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Planning and Infrastructure Department invited the Salmon River Central School District's Board of Education (BOE) and Superintendent, Jane Collins, to an on-site education of the SRMT's public water system and treatment capabilities. The purpose of the tour of the state of the art facility along the St. Lawrence River was to assist in the intent to research options for the school's future water supply. In attendance were government oversight personnel from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Gerry McKenna, Mike Lowy and Bob Williams and Susan Kennedy from the Department of Health.

SRCS District has been challenged with water quality issues for the past several years. The last capital project involved the installation of geo-thermal wells, unfortunately resulting in a leak and contaminating the groundwater supply. Corrective measures were taken, and further contamination was minimal. Samples were in line with New York State standards, but the BOE and Superintendent proposed to keep a bottled water order in place for students and staff. Piping issues and pump repairs have added to the problems within the school. During the last capital project vote, it was proposed and mandated by NYSDOH, that the Salmon River School District seek a clean water source for the school, its staff and students. The vote passed, and a determination has been made there are three reasonable options for the school to consider. One is to drill a new well on school property; the second is to connect to the Fort Covington public water system which needs a new groundwater well source, and the third is to extend the waterline from the end of Route 37 to the school via 37 and School Road and connect to the SRMT system.

Helping Build A Better Tomorrow

412 State Route 37
Akwesasne, New York 13655
Phone: 518-358-2272

The SRMT Water Treatment Facility processes on average 500,000 gallons of water daily for 90-95% of the residents of Akwesasne. The Facility has a total capacity of 1.2 million gallons / day with a maximum utilization of 800,000 gallons / day reached only in the summer months, notably, when school use is at it's lowest. Conservation plans are being discussed to reduce future consumption during peak times. The quality of water is excellent, and has received national awards based on both taste and quality metrics. Current system highlights include a dual sand filtration system, ultraviolet treatment and a fully redundant, computerized system monitored 24/7.

Ernie Thompson, the Director of Planning and Infrastructure pointed out the SRMT made a decision to keep the old water treatment plant "to provide us with perspective on where we were and how far we've come" in upgrading our water treatment processes. "We continuously improved upon our water quality. We take pride in what we have and how we manage our water supply".

Susan Kennedy, representative from the Department of Health in Saranac Lake responded to an inquiry by the Superintendent on contamination management by referencing the history of the Tribe's efforts to mitigate disinfection byproduct levels, aka, chlorine, and indicated, "the Tribe has done a really good job of addressing this. It can be a difficult thing to manage."

Ms. Collins stated the school has a responsibility to work within two entities as part of their analysis, the DOH and Facility Planning of the State Education Department. A dedicated line to the school is essential. From a financial perspective, the District would receive aid for the connection fee; the Tribe would own the water line. Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs stated, "It is our shared responsibility to ensure our children have clean water for consumption. We have diligently sought the highest standards for water quality; it is time to expand our expertise and environmental resources beyond our territory for the benefit of our youth."

A final decision on the school's water source must be made by July of 2014 to meet the project completion target date of September 1, 2016.

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.