

2010 Canute Dalmasse Award - Dolores Kuhn, Assistant Regional Engineer

Dolores has worked in the Springfield office for 24 years. She has certainly shown her dedication to natural resources and public health as a regulator; by making sure that drinking water supplies and wastewater disposal systems are designed to Chapter 1 standards. These standards are to protect groundwater aquifers (potable drinking water), surface water (lakes, rivers, streams, ponds for recreation and wetlands for water quality). Dolores has a Masters degree from UVM in Plant and Soil science and has also completed the New England Regional Soil Science Certificate Program. She takes this knowledge and applies it directly to her job when discussing and explaining to licensed designers, landowners and staff, the practical application of wastewater disposal and Vermont soil. This provides the really only effective measure of treatment, disposal and recycling (closed loop system) of potable drinking water – to domestic wastewater – and back to potable drinking water.

Events of the past years involving potable drinking water (groundwater extraction in East Montpelier, drought and contaminated water in Georgia and Texas) confirm the need for protection of our drinking water sources. With the overwhelming majority of Vermonters getting their drinking water from deepwater aquifers and using on-site wastewater disposal, it is imperative that the Agency has public stewards like Dolores to make sure the required minimum isolation distances and the designs of wastewater disposal systems are met. Current and future generations of Vermonters do not/may not even realize or understand how the dedication and actions of Division employees, like Dolores may very well preserve the fate of Vermont's drinking water quality.

Being as we do not live in any one person's view of a perfect world, there are individuals that feel they do not need to follow regulations or feel that their project is "for the greater good" and therefore should have the required safety distances "relaxed". In her 24 years of work, Dolores has had to explain many times the reasons for the required minimum native soil required, depth to seasonal high water table, depth to ledge, equal distribution and the requirement to treat drinking water contaminants like arsenic, sodium and chloride. Dolores always keeps her calm and always exhibits extremely high personal ethics when dealing with tough projects and compliance situations.

As a result of the more recent turn of economic events, RIF's, retirements and layoffs, Dolores is now also in charge of running the Licensed Designer Program. This not only includes making and giving and correcting the Designer A (written and field exams) and B exams, but also handling all calls regarding license renewal, course questions regarding continuing education units (CEU's) and making sure the Agency fulfills its statutory obligation to provide adequate

training opportunities. This makes even less “down time” during the winter months, as it now is spent organizing and providing training, preparing exams and dealing with frantic and harried designers who just remembered that their license is going to expire at the end of the month and they are short 8 hours worth of CEU’s. Dolores gives them a chance to “vent” their frustration and anxiety, does NOT point them to our website listing over 40+ courses they could have taken for the previous two years when they claim “there wasn’t enough training for them to take” and then proceeds empathetically with the available courses, reviewing courses that they can take but need approved first and provisional licenses.

Members of the Springfield Regional Office have been together for many years. From Fish & Wildlife to Forest, Parks & Recreation to Act 250, EVERYONE knows Dolores. A “G” rated practical joker. She is one of the kindest, gentlest souls in this office. Her words of encouragement, empathy and understanding always make it easy to talk to Dolores. She is not big on getting noticed or ever being the center of attention. Her quiet dedication to her work (with an ever increasing workload since universal jurisdiction in 7/1/07 and the Licensed Designer Program) and this office is why Dolores Kuhn is the perfect candidate to receive this award.