ATV meeting on Water: health, environment and biodiversity

Groundwater parks and drinking water

Erik Arvin. Prof. emer. DTU Sustain. 15. april, 2024

Composition of ground water and drinking water

Makro-ions

Ca, Mg, Na, K, HCO₃, Cl, SO₄, NO₃

Mikro-ions

NH₄, NO₂, Fe, Mn, H₂S, Pb, Cd, Hg, Ni, Cr, Cu, Zn, Al, Li, Ba, As, Sb, F, Br, I, Se, Sr

Organic matter/compounds

Humus/fulvus, PAH, PFAS, HC, HCX, phenols, pesticides, phthalates, etc.

The compounds can affect human health, dependent on the concentrations.

Ole Winther Christensen, Dir. GEUS, Politiken, **1993**.

Groundwater contamination with nitrate and pesticides

"It is still possible to change the situation – but we have to act now. If not, it can be too late" **KRONIKEN I POLITIKEN /** Onsdag 26. maj 1993

Giften i in drinking water drikkevandet

> Af OLE WINTHER CHRISTENSEN



GENNEM DE sidste uger har man bl.a. i Politiken kunnet læse, at der er fundet rester af sprøjtegifte i drikkevandet på både Fyn og i Københavns Amt. For ikke så lang tid siden vakte det betydelig opsigt i medierne, at Ribe Amt delvis måtte lukke Esbjerg vandforsyning, fordi vandet indeholdt rester af klorerede opløeningsmidler. Samtidig kan man læse, at Amtsrådsforeningen og Miljøstyrelsen i en fælles redegørelse fastslår, at det bliver betydeligt dyrere end ventet at fjerne de danske giftgrunde. Nu opgøres det samlede beløb til at være mellem 22 og 23 milliarder kroner! Hvad skal man tro? Kan man overhovedet drikke det vand der kommer ud af hanerne? Som Politiken skrev: Det er da ikke så mærkeligt, at danskerne ikke lever så længe, når selv postevandet er farligt! Men er det? Hvor omfattende er problemerne? Kan vi overhovedet rette op på situationen, og hvad vil det koste? Danmarks Geologiske Undersøgelse

(DGU), amterne og Miljøstyrelsen, har bl.a. til opgave at overvåge det danske drikkevand samt at rådgive vore politikere om, hvorledes forureningsproblemerne kan løses. På den baggrund synes jeg, det er rimeligt både at forsøge at svare på ovenstående spørgsmål samt at give vore politikere nogle gode råd med på vejen.

LAD OS starte med at slå fast, at Danmarks drikkevandsforsyning næsten udelukkende er baseret på oppumpning af grundvand. Det danske grundvand er et betydeligt aktiv for det danske samfund. Det er nemlig rent fra naturens hånd og skal ikke underkastes en kostbar rensning, før det kan anvendes som sundt, velsmagende og billigt drikkevand. I dag kan vi konstatere, at denne situation har været under radikal forandring gennem mange år. Skønt der stadig findes store områder med godt og rent grundvand, er grundvandet nu nogle steder så forurenet, at det ikke mere umiddelbart kan anvendes til drikkevandsformål. Hvor det forurenede grundvand trænger frem til vandværkernes indvindingsboringer, bliver de lukket, og vandindvindingen bliver flyttet til uforurenede områder. Det er naturligvis dyrt at lukke boringer og vandværker, og det koster mange penge at etablere nye anlæg til erstatning for de gamle. Herudover, viser overvågningen af grundvandet (ref. 1), at der er meget betydelige grundvandsressourcer, som nu er truet af forurening.

Overvågning af grundvandets kvalitet er et centralt element i den vandmiljøplan, som Folketinget vedtog 1987. Det blev dengang besluttet af etablere et omfattende varslingssystem, som kunne registrere ændringer

Pesticide residuals in active drinking water wells (%)



Reference: Walter Brüsch

What is the solution? – expert proposals from ATV Soil and Groundwater white paper: "Drinking water of the future – How do we ensure clean drinking water for future generations?" (Nov 2023):

- Water treatment or mixing with less polluted water when limit values are exceeded
- Raise the limit values for pesticide residuals
- Accept the chemical contaminants, live with it, it is not harmful to health!
- Better approval of chemical substances
- Pollution prevention

The authorisation system for chemicals and ground water protection has failed

- The approval system for chemicals/pesticides does not provide enough protection against groundwater pollution!
- Despite tightening up over time, the system is too "coarsemeshed"
- The approval system accepts that pesticides can enter groundwater in accordance with the limit value for drinking water!
- Absurdly small protection areas: 10 m, 50 m, 300 m, BNBO
- Even the BNBOs, the near-borehole protection areas that cover perhaps 10% of the groundwater-forming areas, ended up in management chaos.

The sustainable solution: Prevention of pollution with "Groundwater parks"

- The catchment areas where groundwater-threatening activities must not take place. "Areas free of chemicals."
- Clean-up of waste sites. The Regions do a good job!
- In **rural** areas: no discharge of chemicals, including pesticides and nitrification inhibitors.
- In **urban** areas: No leaking sewers, no leaking deep thermal wells, no pesticide use, no large chemical storage
- **Combined** with nature/biodiversity, forests, eco-farming, renewable energy plants,....,

Groundwater parks comply with EU legislation

- EU Drinking Water Directive from Dec. 2020:
- Protection zones shall be established in the catchment areas of groundwater based on a risk analysis and the zones shall be ensured by risk management (action plans)
- Efforts must be made to "reduce the level of treatment".

Groundwater parks must be multifunctional: clean groundwater, nature/biodiversity, mosaic forests, recreation, organic farming, climate adaptation, renewable energy (solar cells and wind turbines)



Future land use – possibilities for synergy

- Groundwater parks:
- Forests:
- Nature:
- VE (sun and wind, 2030):
- Climate adaptation ("water parks"):
- Cities, roads, infrastructure:
- Agriculture, incl. organic:

0 -> 5 % 14 -> 20-25 % 10 -> 30 % 0.5 -> 1.5 % ? 14->? % 62 -> 40-50 %

It will not work without talented candidates!

- Too few people are being trained!
- They are trained too narrowly: multifunctionality requires multidisciplinary competencies
- What causes lack of quantity and quality?
- The research that drives education is too narrow
- Business is too one-eyed
- The emphasis is on technology, little prevention, which is sustainable and good economy for society
- Politicians are not ambitious. EU directives that drive development must be "minimum-implemented"

What attracts students?

- Many students want to "save the world"
- They are not attracted by "treatment"
- They want prevention of pollution and sustainability
- Groundwater parks are good examples

Thank you for your attention



Future groundwater park in Birkerød

