

# **DNR Update for Bonanza Valley GWMA Project**

## **GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY**

Minnesota's use of groundwater has increased over the last two decades. An increasing reliance on groundwater may not be a sustainable path for continued economic growth and development.

The DNR is establishing the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) to help improve groundwater appropriation decisions and help groundwater users better understand and plan for future development opportunities. The area's boundary extends from just south of Alexandria to the area around Paynesville and includes the cities of Paynesville, Brooten, Belgrade, Westport, Glenwood and Villard.

More information about the GWMA will be [posted](#).

## **DNR HOLDS PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING ON FEB. 26**

The Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area Project Advisory Team met for the first time on Wednesday, Feb. 26, in the Community Room of the Pope County Courthouse in Glenwood. The DNR is requesting advice and comment from the Project Advisory Team and the public on the development of a plan for sustainable use of groundwater in the Bonanza Valley. Following a brief welcome, members of the advisory team introduced themselves and explained why they were interested in the process. Fourteen of the 18 advisory committee members were present. Members include:

Mark Hauck	DNR (Project Manager)
Jim Anderson	Irrigators Ass'n of MN and irrigator in Bonanza Valley
Dean Beck	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Megan Benage	DNR Ecologist
Scott Glup	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ron Halvorson	Irrigator in Bonanza Valley
Dan Langseth	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Maggie Leach	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Jim Lundy	Minnesota Department of Health
Ron Mergen	City of Paynesville
Aaron Meyer	Minnesota Rural Water Association
Janell Miersch	DNR Hydrologist
Scott Pearson	DNR Senior Groundwater Hydrologist
Rick Reimer	Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District
Amanda Strommer	Pope County Land and Resource Management
Dave Traut	Traut Well Drilling
Brad Wenz	Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
Jerry Wright	Irrigators Association of Minnesota

In addition, 20 members of the public were in attendance. The group represented a variety of interests including a lake association, county commissioner, private consultant, well drillers, irrigators, staff from Soil and Water Conservation District and local media and others.

## **GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREAS EXPLAINED**

An overview of groundwater management areas (GWMA) was explained to the group. GWMA have been initiated in response to the increased use of groundwater in Minnesota and potential for contamination. Statewide there has been a 35 percent increase in groundwater use over the past 25 years. The Bonanza Valley area has seen a 175 percent increase during the same period.

The groundwater management area strategic plan focuses on sustainability of resources through a transparent process involving local stakeholders.

A DNR hydrologist explained that to determine the boundary for the Groundwater Management Area he analyzed the hydrogeology, water use, natural resources, water quality and the various city, county and watershed boundaries in the Bonanza Valley area. He went on to describe these factors and answered questions. The group discussed water as an economic development driver and recognized that the issue is bigger than the Bonanza Valley. It may involve new legislation, managing multiple interests and using innovation to successfully implement the plan.

It was recognized by the group that there are many varied interests within the community that value groundwater: lakeshore owners, irrigators, farmers, municipalities, individual well owners, sportsmen and that we need to work together to manage our water wisely and ensure quality of life.

The Project Advisory Team and audience members said that through good communication and accurate information, the group will be able to make important strides. The DNR wants the public to know that even though there may not be complete answers now, there is a process to develop the answers which is adaptable and flexible.

The importance of communication was emphasized and one person suggested that over-communication could assure a successful outcome. Other advice to DNR was to keep an open mind, set achievable goals, stay focused through this complex task, and keep the process open as it is now.

## **UPCOMING PROJECT MEETINGS**

**March 26 – Project Advisory Team meeting: The Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area Project Advisory Team will meet from 9 a.m. to noon at the American Legion Post in Paynesville. The public is welcome to attend. Discussion topics will include reflections on the Boundary Analysis and describing specific examples of water use and their effects in the Bonanza Valley.**

**Future Project Advisory Team meetings are tentatively scheduled for the following dates: April 23, May 28, June 25, July 23, Aug. 20, Sept. 24, Oct. 22 and Nov. 19. Details on meeting times and locations will follow.**

Individuals do not need to be on the Advisory Team to attend. The Advisory Team meetings are open for interested parties to observe and time is available at the end of the formal meeting to provide comments and ideas.

## **PROJECT WORK**

DNR staff are identifying a proposed working boundary for the Bonanza Valley based on several criteria, including current groundwater use patterns, hydrogeology, jurisdictional frameworks and groundwater dependent features.

For more information on all GWMA's, go to the DNR's [GWMA webpage](#).

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO ENGAGE**

- Web based Survey – Read the [Draft Groundwater Strategic Plan](#), complete the [survey](#)
- For more information on the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management [Project](#).

## **Contact information**

If you have questions about this project, please contact Mark Hauck (DNR project manager at 320-223-7846; [mark.hauck@state.mn.us](mailto:mark.hauck@state.mn.us) ) or visit the DNR's [GWMA webpage](#)