

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

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is establishing the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) to improve groundwater management in this important area of the state. The project will create a GWMA Plan that will guide DNR groundwater management actions in the area over the next five years.

The proposed GWMA 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 is [posted on the project web page](#).

## **DNR HOLDS PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING ON APRIL 23**

DNR has formed a “Project Advisory Team” to provide targeted advice as it creates the Bonanza Valley GWMA Plan. Members of the Project Advisory Team include farmers, business people, SWCDs, fish and wildlife service, state agencies, and interested citizens.

Project Advisory Team meetings are open to the public.

The Project Advisory Team met for the third time on Wednesday, April 23, at the Classic Co. Dinner Theater in Brooten. Approximately 25 members of the public also attended the meeting.

Topics discussed at this meeting were:

1. Proposed GWMA Plan objectives;
2. Update on legislative discussion of GWMA's;
3. DNR's groundwater management budget;
4. Groundwater as a priority for DNR;
5. How to improve groundwater communication and education in the GWMA.

Below are highlights of these discussions.

### **1. Proposed GWMA Plan objectives**

The Project Advisory Team once again reviewed the proposed objectives for the GWMA Plan:

- By 2020, all aquifers in this GWMA are within sustainability thresholds for water levels
- By 2020, all appropriators of groundwater will have the required permits
- By 2020, all permitted groundwater users in this GWMA employ water conservation practices
- By 2020, all aquifers in this GWMA are without water use conflicts and well interferences
- By 2020, no permitted groundwater appropriations will be adversely impacting trout streams, calcareous fens, other groundwater-dependent surface water features, or other groundwater-dependent biological communities
- By 2020, no permitted groundwater appropriations in this GWMA are adversely impacting water quality

These proposed objectives are adapted directly from the draft strategic plan for DNR's groundwater management program.

## 2. Update on legislative discussion of GWMA's

The legislature is considering additions to the GWMA statute that would require half the members of the Project Advisory Team to be holders of groundwater permits. If these changes are passed, DNR will have to adjust Advisory Team membership.

## 3. DNR's groundwater management budget

The legislature increased DNR's budget for groundwater management in July 2013. As a result, DNR has initiated the three pilot GWMA projects, and is increasing data collection, enhancing permit review, increasing compliance and enforcement activities, and looking to increase support for SWCD groundwater-related work.

## 4. Groundwater as a priority for DNR

In addition to increasing investments in groundwater management, DNR has strengthened its collaboration with other state agencies around groundwater. As an example, DNR staff meets monthly with staff from the Departments of Health and Agriculture, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Board of Soil and Water Resources to discuss groundwater issues. DNR is also very committed to evaluating its progress on managing groundwater sustainably.

## 5. How to improve groundwater communication and education in the GWMA

The Project Advisory Team broke into small groups to discuss how DNR could improve its communication and education about groundwater. Audience members also formed small groups to discuss the question. The small groups wrote down ideas that were collected by DNR, and they highlighted their ideas orally.

The groups suggested a number of topics on which DNR could improve its communication: observation well data; descriptions of permit processes; impacts of water use on all users; water laws; modern monitoring technology; soil health; water related trends; and groundwater models.

The groups also suggested ways to better deliver this information, including traditional media outlets, partnering with existing associations, developing web resources, and piloting yearly townhall-style meetings.

Jerry Wright, a member of the Project Advisory Team and resident of Glenwood representing the Irrigation Association of Minnesota shared historic rainfall information for several places in the Bonanza Valley. The trend over the past 100 years of data show slightly more average rainfall over time.

## **UPCOMING PROJECT MEETINGS**

**May 28 – Project Advisory Team Meeting** from 9 a.m. to noon at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Belgrade. The public is welcome to attend. The Project Advisory Team will discuss how to improve compliance with groundwater appropriation regulations and how to promote water conservation practices in the Bonanza Valley.

**Future Project Advisory Team meetings** are tentatively scheduled for the following dates: June 25, July 23, Aug. 20, Sept. 24, Oct. 22 and Nov. 19.

Individuals do not need to be on the Project Advisory Team to attend these meetings. Project Advisory Team meetings are open for the public to observe and time is available during the meeting to provide comments and ideas.

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

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO ENGAGE**

- May 28 - Project Advisory Team meeting of the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area, 9 a.m. to noon, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, Belgrade, MN.
- Web based Survey – Read the [Draft Groundwater Strategic Plan](#), complete the [survey](#)
- For more information on the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Project, browse to [www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/area-bv.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/area-bv.html).

## **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](#)