

DNR Update for Bonanza Valley GWMA Project

Groundwater is vital to Minnesota's prosperity. Minnesota's use of groundwater has increased significantly over the last two decades. With increasing use, Minnesota runs the risk of overusing this very important resource.

Minnesota DNR has the responsibility to ensure that groundwater use remains sustainable. DNR is committed to using good science in making its groundwater use decisions. DNR wants to inform and involve citizens as it manages this vital resource.

DNR has initiated a Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) project in the Bonanza Valley. The proposed project boundary extends from just south of Alexandria to the area around Paynesville and includes the cities of Paynesville, Brooten, Belgrade, Westport, Glenwood and Villard.

The Bonanza Valley GWMA project will produce a plan that will guide DNR groundwater management in the area.

DNR has formed a project advisory team to provide advice and feedback as it develops the plan. The project advisory team includes farmers, permitted users, business people, SWCDs, fish and wildlife service, state agencies, and interested citizens. Project advisory team meetings are open to the public.

This update is a product of the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area project. More information about the Bonanza Valley GWMA is [posted on the DNR website](#).

DNR HOLDS PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING ON MAY 28TH

The Project Advisory Team met for the fourth time on Wednesday, May 28, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Saboe Levenson Post in Belgrade, MN. Approximately 23 members of the public also attended the meeting.

Topics discussed at this meeting were:

1. Update on legislative changes to the GWMA statute;
2. Improving compliance with groundwater appropriation regulations;
3. Promoting the wise use of groundwater and the implementation of water conservation practices;
4. Audience perspectives and questions.

Below are highlights of these discussions.

1. Update on legislative action about GWMA's:

The legislature made changes to the statute regarding groundwater management areas. One of the changes requires that a "majority of the advisory team members shall be public and private entities that currently hold water use permits for water appropriations from the affected water resources." DNR will need to make some changes to the project advisory team membership to comply with the new legislation.

2. Improving compliance with groundwater appropriation regulations.

The project advisory team offered a range of ideas on compliance to DNR through small group discussions and feedback sheets.

Some of those ideas included:

- Provide permit holders an overview of annual water use in the area.
- Provide permit holders information about the number of new permits in the area.
- Provide permit holders information about the impacts of water use on other resources, such as wetlands, lakes, and rivers, as well as impacts on domestic wells.
- Conduct annual spot audits of permit holders to see if everything is in order.
- Work with SWCDs and Department of Health to look at well records.

The full set of ideas generated by the advisory team will be electronically scanned and used by DNR in creating the GWMA plan.

3. Promoting the wise use of groundwater and the implementation of water conservation practices.

Project advisory team members Jerry Wright, Holly Kovarik and Jim Anderson distributed materials describing water conservation technologies that are presently available to agricultural irrigators. These technologies include using the weather station at the Rosholt Experimental Farm to more efficiently manage irrigation water, using moisture testing equipment, and variable rate irrigation equipment to apply water where it is needed most.

DNR staff member Dave Leuthe suggested that many Minnesotans are beginning to move from a mindset of water abundance to a mindset of water limits. Many people are looking more closely at water use, re-use, and recycling to ensure sustainability by managing water differently.

The project advisory team offered a range of ideas on promoting wise use and conservation of water through small group discussions and feedback sheets.

Some of those ideas included:

- Provide incentives for proven conservation practices and innovative technologies.
- Look at groundwater recharge issues that can restore wetlands.
- Improve understanding of what “state of the art” technologies are in terms of costs and benefits.
- Reach out to irrigators and have them report on continuing education activities and show what conservation activities they are doing on their permit.
- Encourage and work with SWCDs, crop consultants, well drillers, and others who can provide assistance in adopting conservation practices.

4. Audience perspectives and questions.

It was suggested by an audience member that permit applicants who received a 'yellow letter' under the new Well Notification Process could be better informed by DNR of their options and next steps in securing an appropriation permit.

DNR staff are evaluating options for improving the preliminary well notification process.

UPCOMING PROJECT MEETINGS

June 25th – Project Advisory Team Meeting from 9 a.m. to noon at the Central Square Cultural and Civic Center in Glenwood, MN. The public is welcome to attend.

The Project Advisory Team will discuss how DNR will improve the information available for groundwater management decisions.

Future Project Advisory Team meetings are tentatively scheduled for the following dates: 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 to the DNR's [GWMA webpage](#).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO ENGAGE

- June 25th - Project Advisory Team meeting of the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Central Square Cultural and Civic Center in Glenwood, 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.

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) or visit the DNR's [GWMA webpage](#)