

## **DNR Update for the Straight River Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) Project – May 1, 2014**

**Project Background:** The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is establishing a GWMA to enhance its ability to make better decisions on groundwater appropriation permits. The DNR shares responsibility for managing groundwater resources with public sector partners, as well as with individuals and businesses that use groundwater. The DNR is responsible for permitting high volume groundwater users, for collecting information on groundwater resources, and for providing technical assistance that supports groundwater conservation.

### **UPDATE: DNR HOLDS THIRD PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING**

The Straight River GWMA Project Advisory Team (PAT) met on Thursday, April 17, 2014 in Park Rapids.

### **AGENDA TOPICS:**

**Current status of groundwater management objectives:** The PAT reflected on draft groundwater management objectives for 2013-2018 presented at the last meeting. Two objectives (B and D) are near to being met: *By 2020, all appropriators of groundwater in this GWMA have the required permits;* and, *By 2020, all aquifers in this GWMA are without water use conflicts and well interferences.* Of the remaining four objectives, PAT members suggested that C will be the easiest to meet. Several suggestions for improving and clarifying the objectives were offered.

### **Draft Groundwater Management Objectives for 2013-2018**

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

**Statewide Update:** Jason Moeckel, manager of the Inventory, Monitoring and Analysis Section, DNR Division of Ecological and Water Resources, provided an overview of recent DNR investments made to improve groundwater management. He also outlined what is planned for additional state funding coming in July. The new funds will increase staffing to handle permits more effectively, increase monitoring and analysis of stressed aquifers, improve enforcement and compliance efforts, and install additional monitoring wells.

**Advisory Team Input on GWMA Strategies:** The DNR Draft Strategic Plan for Groundwater Management outlines seven strategies to be addressed in the Straight River GWMA Plan. Two of these strategies were discussed by the PAT.

- Strategy 1--Heighten the priority given to groundwater management; and
- Strategy 5--Improve communication and education about groundwater importance and challenges.

Moeckel presented on progress made to date by DNR for Strategy 1. This includes allocating additional resources to groundwater management, adjusting staffing and workloads to focus on groundwater, and increasing analysis of water level trends and usage.

The Project Advisory Team broke into small groups to brainstorm ideas for Strategy 5, *Improve communication and education about groundwater importance and challenges*. Everyone agreed that more information about groundwater would be helpful to stakeholders and the general public. Suggestions included providing basic fact sheets, publishing additional groundwater trend data and analysis, and explaining conservation efforts. Members recommended several forms of media should be used to reach a diversity of residents and groups in the area. In addition to newspapers and web-based efforts, communication strategies could include newsletters, posters, and videos.

### **NEXT MEETING OF THE PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM (PAT)**

The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., at the Northwoods Bank community meeting room.

### **Tentative agenda topics include discussion about the following strategies:**

- Strategy 4—Improve compliance with groundwater appropriation regulations; and
- Strategy 7—Promote the wise use of groundwater and the implementation of water conservation practices.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information on this project, please contact Tim Crocker – DNR Project Manager at 320-616-2450, ext. 232, [tim.crocker@state.mn.us](mailto:tim.crocker@state.mn.us). You can also [visit the DNR webpage](#).