



# Groundwater Thresholds Project

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## Highlights from the August 26, 2015 Stakeholder Advisors Meeting

The DNR hosted the first meeting of the “GW Thresholds Project Stakeholder Advisors” on August 26, 2015 at the City of Minnetonka municipal complex. The meeting was open to the public. There were over fifty people in attendance.

What follows are some highlights from the meeting. Stakeholder comments are listed and marked by a “dot.”

Luke Skinner, Director of the DNR Division of Ecological and Water Resources, welcomed attendees to the meeting.

After introducing the meeting and the participants, the facilitator asked the invited Stakeholder Advisors to respond to the following questions: *Who do you represent? What are some of your initial thoughts?*

Here are some highlights of their responses:

- Education – need to help people understand the resource.
- I represent livestock producers who need the permits.
- Hope this can set the stage for a stakeholder driven process to set numerical standards to protect resources.
- This directly affects our business. Involve well drillers, we work with the resource, we have information.
- Golf courses are the largest rain gardens – some think golf courses abuse water - we need to use water – set numerical standards.
- Look at issue in a watershed context.
- Actions that embrace use of water for long term sustainable use – challenge is quantifying use and impacts.
- Learn about the issue – conserve and protect drinking water.
- Long term sustainability - connection of quantity and quality - integration across agencies.
- Interagency effort to manage groundwater resource –hope it sets stage for stakeholder effort to continue to address the issue.
- Have a sustainable quality water supply – a total water solution – surface and groundwater – holistic approach.
- Well defined criteria for thresholds to make water use more sustainable.



- Thoughtful approach that protects water and communities.
- Finding out what insights the report will include.
- Enough scientific data to set up thresholds.
- Definitions that represent hierarchy of users – avoid trying to “prove the negative.”
- Better communication between well drillers and DNR – common sense approach to aquifer testing.
- MN COLA – glad that lakes interests have a seat at the table.

Senator Fischbach attended the meeting and briefly explained the history of the legislative request for the Report.

Here is a synopsis of her remarks:

- In 2010 there was a legislative change that connected 103G.287 (groundwater appropriations) with 103G.285 (surface water appropriations). This change connected groundwater use with negative impacts to trout streams. This change had an impact on the City of Cold Spring and the Third Street Brewery located in Cold Spring. The Brewery’s use of groundwater was believed to have an impact on Cold Spring Creek.
- In 2014, the Legislature changed 103G.287 again, changing the term “potential impact” to the term “negative impact.” In 2015, the continuing legislative discussion led to a call for a study to help clarify the term “negative impact.”
- It sounds like there is a need for ongoing and broader discussions about water. We will need to think about getting funding to support that broader discussion.

Jason Moeckel, from the DNR, made two presentations to the group. One presentation was about the DNR Thresholds Project. The other was about groundwater resources and issues. Both are available as pdfs at these links:

[http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/gw\\_thresholds/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/gw_thresholds/index.html)

Following Jason’s presentations, there was open dialogue among the invited stakeholders and the public who attended the meeting. (Jason responded to some of the stakeholder comments. His responses are listed after JM.)

Here are some highlights from that dialogue:

- The Legislative Water Commission is a forum for year round discussions – balance between potential and actual impacts.
- Does DNR have record of trout in Cold Spring Creek?
- Elders in Cold Spring say creek was intermittent.
- How can we set numbers?
- Looking for criteria as well as a number.



- There is water chemistry data available that can clarify connectedness.
- What information has been given to the legislature so far, so we can understand, so we can correct it?
  - *JM - We met with the legislature twice – we said it was more complicated than a simple % so a report is a good idea – did not get into the technical detail that we will share with you at the next meeting*
- Echoing education effort – need to tell the true picture.
- Four meetings – kind of short.
- Scope of this effort is too narrow.
- Missing entities – USGS, MDA...
- Missing entities – Met Council; this task is negative impacts – got a narrow focus – other larger questions at other tables.
- Where is the U of MN? Negative impacts: only quantity or also quality.
- Applicants feeling pressured about aquifer tests.
- Negativity of report – people are being negatively impacted by the water permitting process.
- Growing awareness / shift around the country – want to see MN as a leader in water management.
- Get us to a trajectory to meet increasing demand.
- What is the scope of negative impacts?
- Which “waters”? Are calcareous fens included?
  - *JM – Fens are protected.*
- Will the thresholds be quantitative and numerical?
  - *JM – Maybe. Could be criteria-based as well*
- Thresholds are for negative impacts, not for a specific permit?
  - *JM – Yes.*
- Provide a picture of the interconnectedness of these statutes/rules with other statutes/rules, federal regulations.
  - *JM – At Meeting 3 we will clarify implications of recommendations in other parts of rules and statutes*
- Provide a flow chart of how you make decisions, at what stage do you use what type of information.
- Is monitoring information available?
  - *JM - Yes, we upload it to web*
- What about water quality?
  - *JM - We will address it*
- How much is recharge figured in to the catchment figure?
  - *JM - We will explore this more deeply at the next meeting*
- In the trends of increasing use, what % of that increase is due to agriculture? What % is municipal?



- *JM - We will tease this out if we can*
- How are the calcareous fens determined?
  - *JM - Ongoing survey work by the DNR Minnesota Biological Survey*
- How do you currently figure out the issue of wetland impacts from groundwater appropriations?
  - *JM - That is one of the questions we will be exploring*
- How do we incorporate climate change in the project?
  - *JM - Not sure how we will in this project – it definitely sets a context*
- Narrow time frames – how do you keep track through time?
  - *JM - In GWMA plans, all permits will be reviewed over the next five years*
- There are other factors, like runoff/storm water, that can impact streams
  - *JM - Yes. Lakeville and Vermillion River trout stream is a good example*
- Negative impacts mitigated by other actions – is it negative impacts by itself, or negative impacts in spite of other management actions e.g., negative impacts to streams, but I can mitigate with rain garden?
  - *JM - Are you asking how mitigation can be /should be incorporated in permit decision process*
- In Cold Spring – we are looking for sustainable solutions
- How can MN use “gray water” as a recharge source
  - *JM - MDH is looking into this*
- How many major aquifers are there? How many monitoring wells?
  - *JM - It's variable around the state – about 900 wells, but not evenly distributed*
- Can you give us some case studies?
  - *JM - Yes. At the next meeting*
- Is trout stream the example or is it the critical indicator?
  - *JM - We focus on trout streams because they are more sensitive, but the other surface waters are important.*
- Can we have substitutes attend the meetings?
  - *JM - Yes, but please help with the transitions – bring your substitute up to speed as best you can.*
- Not enough time in the schedule
  - *JM - Should we schedule a 5<sup>th</sup> meeting?*
- Yes. Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, when draft report is available
  - *JM - Okay. We will try that.*

The DNR will add another Stakeholder Advisor Group meeting, so instead of four meetings there will be five.

Luke Skinner brought the meeting to an end by thanking all attendees for their participation.



Note: The next Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 30, at Golden Valley City Hall, from 10 AM to 2:30 PM. Golden Valley City Hall is located at 7800 Golden Valley Rd, Golden Valley MN 55427, near the intersection of Highways 55 and 169.