

April 28, 2009

PRESS RELEASE: GLENN COUNTY GROUNDWATER UPDATE

The semi-annual spring groundwater level measurements for Glenn County made by the California Department of Water Resources, Northern District (DWR) were completed during the week of March 23-27, 2009. Spring measurements are the basis for groundwater level Basin Management Objectives (BMO) established to determine groundwater safe yield in many groundwater management sub-areas of the County.

Based on these measurements, 13 wells within the County that utilize spring measurements for BMO compliance were below average for this time of year. As a comparison, 8 wells were below average at the same time last year. In an effort to increase awareness of groundwater resources, DWR staff has provided statistical information on well depth and well use (domestic, irrigation, monitoring) in a report presented to the Glenn County Water Advisory Committee (WAC) at the April 14, 2009 meeting. All of the wells utilized for BMO compliance are part of the data set presented. Results for the measurements indicate that the average change for all wells measured was 3.5 feet lower than 2008, with the greatest change from wells monitored with a depth greater than 600 feet being 6 feet lower than 2008. As can be expected the type of well showing the largest average decrease of 4.5 feet are for irrigation purposes.

The majority of wells with measurements lower than their objective are in the central and western portion of the county. Lower than average groundwater levels are the result of insufficient rainfall during the winter and spring months, accentuated by the low allocation of surface supply made available to Central Valley Project (CVP) service contractors along the Tehama Colusa Canal (TC). Precipitation and surface application of irrigation water are the primary sources of recharge in our area to meet the needs of the majority of wells used for irrigation. Allocations for TC contractors in 2009 will be less than what were delivered in 2008. As the irrigation season progresses, groundwater levels will experience seasonal fluctuation, which may cause further difficulty in pumping during the peak irrigation season. As the state enters into the third year of drought, we can only expect greater declines during the irrigation season. Keeping this in mind, consider any and all methods of conservation available to you and remember your neighbor may be pumping at the same time you are.

BMO's for groundwater levels were established and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in June, 2001. Currently, all of the wells utilized for BMO compliance are for domestic or agricultural use. Over the years, there have been many dedicated monitoring wells installed by the County and WAC member irrigation districts to monitor groundwater levels and quality. The intent of the monitoring wells is to develop a monitoring network independent from these production wells.

Current and historic groundwater levels in our region can be viewed at the WAC webpage at <http://www.glenncountywater.org> or on DWR's Water Data Library. Their web page is: <http://wdl.water.ca.gov/gw/map> Point to Glenn County and navigate regionally from there. Butte County has developed a regional groundwater information data base program that provides access to groundwater-related information for agencies as well as interested parties with information relating to established BMO's for groundwater elevation, water quality, and land subsidence monitoring. The website address for access to the program is: <http://gis.buttecounty.net/bmoic3>.

If you feel you are experiencing pumping problems that may be due to low groundwater levels, there is a process for documenting this by filing a report of abnormal groundwater level with the Glenn County Department of Agriculture. These report forms are available at 720 N. Colusa Street, Willows or just call (530) 934-6501 and a form will be sent to you.