

# Groundwater Protection Program Public Meeting

**Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2011**

Mid-State Electric Building – Community Meeting Room

**Members present:** John Blakinger (committee chair), Robert Ray (co-chair), Allen Hammerman, Bill Gaetano, Lee Wilkins, Judy Forsythe

**Members not present:** Conrad Ruel, Marietta Qual, Dave Crider, Leon Shields

**DEQ staff present:** Bob Baggett, Brian Mannion, Bill Mason, Eric Nigg,

## Welcome

*Convene:* 6:00 p.m.

*Logistics:* Roll call

*Review agenda:* John proposed amending agenda to move subcommittee updates ahead. Committee agreed, and reviewed and approved agenda.

## Subcommittee Updates

*Well testing:* **Bob:** Conrad came to view testing. Got 57 wells. Thanked committee for helping contact owners.

**Eric:** Thanked county for providing money.

**Bob:** Results in about 45 days, need to confirm with lab.

**Robert:** Can we get well information to start looking at scenario?

**Judy:** Can we get map with wells plotted and labeled with distance from drain field?

**Bob:** Getting accurate information on this would require site visits. Don't know if there are enough resources.

**Eric:** We can do map, using GPS layer.

**Bob:** Will work with county to get map.

**Bob:** To provide sampling books showing detailed locations.

**Judy:** Did we always test from well head?

**Bob:** We purged wells for consistency.



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**Judy:** What about new wells on same property?

**Bob:** We'll make a note of those wells and set aside that data.

*Spray fields:* **Robert:** Spray fields contribute to nitrates, but they have no liability regarding nitrates.

**Eric:** Are you talking about La Pine specifically?

**Robert:** Are there plans to assess a liability for nitrates

**Eric:** Spray field users are already spending a lot of money to treat and dispose of wastewater. DEQ is requiring operators to identify problems, comply with rules and permit conditions and fix any problems.

**Lee:** What about Eagle Crest trucking their nitrates out of the region?

**Bob:** They don't. They land apply across the Hwy. Effluent is used for irrigation of farm land.

**Eric:** In both cases, wastewater is applied to crops, which take up most of the nitrates. We need to nail this down to move on. Asked Bill to work with Rick Hill to get answers.

**Robert:** Requested monitoring well info from Eagle Crest.

**Eric:** They might not have wells. Decision is made on a case by case basis based on an analysis of the risk.

*Options:* Bob and Brian to get presentation vetted for technical accuracy.

**John:** Updated options action items.

*Engagement:* **John:** Reviewed survey questions

**Bob:** Confirmed that the RET map had been removed from the DEQ web site.

**John:** Called Wendy Corn at Newberry Eagle. She sounded eager to have a series with graphics.

**Robert:** Wants articles to include the fact that Bend and Sunriver are definitely not in danger.

**Brian:** Have we resolved whether or not we know that there is no danger, or is it the fact that we don't have enough information to say.

**Bob:** Studies didn't deal with that specific issue.

**Robert:** Paper and county said that. We need to resolve that.

**Eric:** We need to prioritize areas at risk and of less priority. We can roll that message into our report once we have more information.

**Bob:** We'll have to work with USGS and Water Resources to make sure we have the right information, because the studies didn't specifically address that issue.

**Robert:** Bill M. said that it didn't pose a threat to Bend.

**Bill M.:** First cut of people not in danger are people on public water with deeper wells.

**Allen:** Contacted taxing districts and asked if they wanted information from us. Most people want a physical copy of survey; people are already on mailing list. Do we have physical copies to send?

**Lee:** We should send hard copy if requested.

**John:** Outreach subcommittee to meet to finalize strategy to contact districts

## **Review minutes**

Committee agreed, reviewed. Allen moved, Robert second.

## **Committee Status Update**

**John:** Is convinced that onsite systems are the major source of nitrates. There's a nitrate loading going on, and we have to manage the nitrate loading. It's system wide, so we need to consider a sanitation authority or district to manage this: identify high risk areas, sanitation district/authority help manage deployment of phased approach where necessary. Sanitation authority/district could also negotiate with Sunriver and solve other problems.

**Robert:** That limits solution to county.

**Eric:** Don't know a whole lot. Tom from County knows more, but from what we know special districts can cross political boundaries. Requested that committee look further into nuts and bolts of what it takes to form a special authority/district in this case.

**Robert:** An authority can have districts within it.

**Eric:** If a taxing district is formed, there's a possibility for low interest loans and taxes.



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**Bill G.:** Still not convinced there's a necessity for a district. How serious is the problem? Believes it's increasing, but not at a rate to justify setting up sanitary authorities. Economics is an issue, at least \$20k/household. Most homeowners say they don't have water problems. With property values decreasing it doesn't make economic sense.

**John:** District or authority would not unilaterally require upgrades. It would be a way to collect a small amount of money for monitoring, refining requirements and helping the highest priority areas upgrade, and manage this work. Committee would describe what authority approach would look like.

**Bill G.:** That sounds more gradual or reasonable.

**Robert:** We don't know what final approach would look like, but approach would be stepped.

**Lee:** Sanitary authority would help set up sub-districts, including legal help, technical help and funding.

**Bob:** We need to bring an expert in regarding formation of sanitary authorities or districts. Committee agreed.

**Eric:** Sanitary authorities could open up funding sources including state loans. Planning happens under authority can do the specific planning.

## **Bill Mason Q&A II**

**Robert:** Suggested that committee ask new questions and review answers independently. Asked if TMDL info will be available.

**Eric:** Explained TMDL, including how DEQ is assessing nitrogen in the Deschutes basin. We plan to have TMDL done by end of 1012 and analytical results before then.

Committee discussed relationship of groundwater and TMDL.

**Robert:** Need to clarify that we don't know whether groundwater is polluting the river.

**Eric:** Spoke before the county commission and said that we don't know groundwater's effect on river.

**John:** What does nitrate mean as a precursor to other pollution

**Bill M.:** 1mg/l of nitrate indicates about 10 percent liquid from sewage in that water. Nitrate also tend to move faster than other pollutants, so rising nitrate levels might be followed by increasing levels of other pollutants.

**Bob:** Nitrate presence indicates vulnerability of groundwater.



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**Robert:** Requested info on septic systems ability to remove pharmaceuticals and other contaminants.

**Eric:** We know that sewerage and providing high-levels of treatment and land application will definitely help reduce the amount of pollution entering groundwater.

**Robert:** Requested a map of high-density areas to begin looking at potential places to add a sewer system.

**Lee:** Would like to see test results first.

**Robert:** We don't have to wait for test results to look. Results might affect our decisions, but committee can start now.

**Bill M.:** County has "date developed" map. Bob and Bill to get one.

**John:** We need to define criteria that indicates risk. Bill agreed.

**Robert:** What did people do with composting toilets before graywater rule?

**Bob:** Onsite system at 2/3 capacity.

**Robert:** Would sending graywater to septic and using composting toilet that have reduced nitrates to the level of an ATT system?

**Bill M.:** Probably yes.

**Bill G.:** Questions regarding question 1 and 16 on Bill M. sheet. Are DEQ and real estate testing for nitrate and bacteria comparable? Question 16 is outdated (real estate agents are hiring 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to analyze well samples).

**Bill M.:** If a person trained in proper way it will be a good sample. What's missing from the existing databases is who tested it and how? Agrees there can be some improvements and encourages committee to recommend that OHA improve data. Current data is not reliable for things other than screening for broad trends.

**Bill G.:** Improving system would provide much valuable data.

**Eric:** Strongest recommendation would come from real estate group to legislature asking to fix the process. We can't fix that here.

**Robert:** What if we don't see elevated nitrates in new wells?

**Eric:** We need to wait and see.



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## Public Comment

John Huddle: Sanitary authority is something he has thought about. It is a taxing body and even at 4 years out would be a tough sell. A sanitary Authority has a lot of teeth and can deal with other sanitary issues like mosquito control and public water systems.

USGS study does indicate that the deeper water supply wells utilized by Sunriver and Bend are at less risk.

Statistical analysis of sampling results needs to be accomplished by someone with a hydrogeological expertise and background. The methods to be used need to be explained beforehand.

Encouraged more openness in the risk assessments that Bill M. is currently making. Asked if USGS data was part of his assessments. Suggested Bill share his methods that are being used.

The statutes for the RET testing are toothless and would need to be changed. Suggested to Bill G. that he approach a legislator.

Ellen Curry: Lives in the area. Appreciates that the committee is discussing methods of citizen outreach. Need to utilize other outlets than just the Newberry Eagle. If the foundation, framework and necessity for a Sanitary Authority aren't communicated well to the citizens, there will be an uproar.

## Next Meeting topics

- Discuss how many people are in danger of drinking contaminated water?
- Set priorities for committee investigation
- More Questions for Bill Mason
- Comparison between ATT and Composting Toilet.

**Adjourn:** 9:00 p.m.

Action Items:

Action	Owner	Due
Provide map of wells	Bob and Eric	Dec. 6
Bring sampling books for wells	Bob	Dec. 6
Review options presentation	Bob and lead team	Dec. 6
Research sanitary authorities	Committee	TBD
Look for expert on sanitary authorities	Bob	Dec. 6
Retrieve county's date developed map	Bob and Bill	Dec. 6



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