



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

– Margaret Mead

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Feature Stories

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POW applies for grant for well study

By Kathleen Wallace and Judi Tobias

Sandra Martin, president of Protect Our Wells, a citizen-based organization advocating for owners of private wells, announced a proposed well-monitoring program at the group's quarterly meeting in March.

The program will be funded by a grant obtained through the Arkansas Basin Roundtable, under the Statewide Water Supply Initiative of 2003. The grant money will come from the Water Supply Reserve Account, which was created in 2006, Martin said.

Final approval of the program is expected in July, and the money should be available in September, Martin said.

Hydrogeologist Julia Murphy, who advises POW on technical issues, will conduct the study in conjunction with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Upper Big Sandy and Upper Black Squirrel groundwater management districts.

The program will include a needs assessment for each aquifer. "It must be determined if the water supply will support anticipated growth," Murphy said.

For example, Elbert County had a population of 1,574 in 1980 and has approved plans that will bring its population to 78,915. In 30 years, the population of Elbert County is projected at 132,969.

"El Paso County is expected to add more than 250,000 residents over the same 30-year time frame," Martin said. "It can take 10 to 20 years to build a water project, so it is critical to identify future needs as early as possible.

"This program will generate an understanding of the longevity of the existing supply, identify areas where depletions may be occurring and assist in the development of management strategies."

Murphy said the aquifers are essentially non-renewable because they receive little recharge, although the rate of recharge is uncertain because of a lack of data.

The data that is available shows that depletion is occurring. The Arapahoe aquifer is down 15 to 30 feet in the Castle Rock area since the first measurement, a sign of heavy pumping, Murphy said.

"More measurement is needed to establish a baseline," she said. "A well-monitoring program is the first step in finding a solution to water issues. Well users, developers and water providers need to share in that solution."

The proposed program will cover 1,200 square miles and include all of El Paso County. The study group will monitor 25 existing wells plus 10 new wells that will be drilled as part of the program.

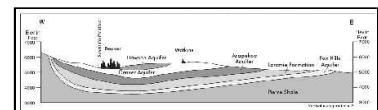
The wells and locations will be selected based on a detailed analysis of available geologic data, and the water level of each well will be measured twice a year, Murphy said. After three years, the Colorado Division of Water Resources will take over the program.

Private well owners interested in participating in the program should contact Martin at 719-351-1640.

For more information on POW, visit the Web site at www.ProtectOurWells.org.



The POW Study Area is shown at the bottom of the drawing.



Sandstone aquifers underlie the vast Denver Basin and supply many of the growing suburban communities, particularly in Douglas County, with groundwater. Adapted from USGS HA-703C. These graphics show the four aquifers in the Colorado Front Range area.