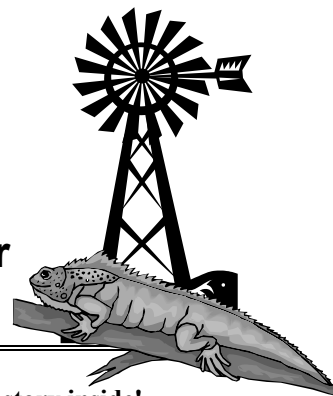


SWiG Update

Southern Willamette Groundwater Project Newsletter

November 2003



—See IGUANA story inside!

Groundwater Management Area for the Southern Willamette Valley Recommended by DEQ

Comment period closes on December 1

If this headline is news to you, you may want to check the “Fact Box” on the last page for some background on the Groundwater Management Area proposed for the Southern Willamette Valley.

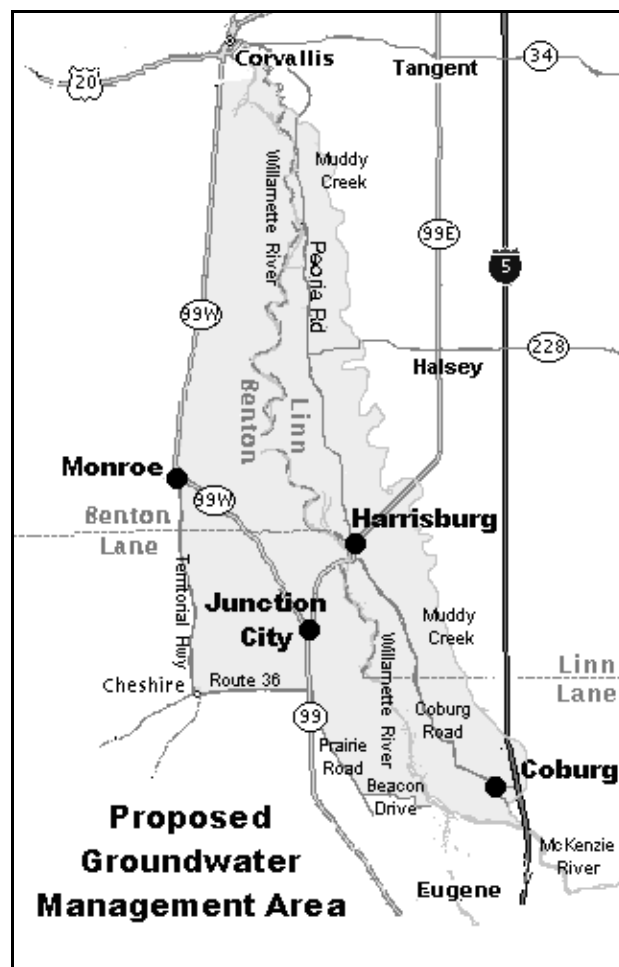
The official recommendation is described in a 31 page report written by Audrey Eldridge of DEQ. Official “Chance to Comment Notice” was submitted to the Secretary of State on September 22, 2003. You may access a copy of this report on the SWiG web site or contact Audrey and she will arrange to for you to view a copy. (See contact info on last page)

Public Hearings & Comment Period

During the last two weeks of October, the SWiG project team held seven public meetings at various locations. Audrey Eldridge gave a presentation explaining the reasons for the proposed Groundwater Management Area, followed by stimulating informal discussions. After the first hour, the floor was open for official comments. Only one official comment was recorded during these proceedings.

Your comments are needed! DEQ is charged with implementing the “Groundwater Law.” *People like you are responsible for making sure that state agencies make judgments that reflect the public’s interest.*

The official comment period ends December 1, 2003. See the Public Notice (attached) for details on how to comment or contact Audrey Eldridge of DEQ.



SWiG in the News

Did you hear about nitrates in the groundwater in between Eugene and Corvallis? If you read the newspaper, watched TV news, or listened to the radio on October 3, you probably did.

Two reporters attended the *Well and Septic* class at Lane County OSU Extension in Eugene on October 2—one from the *Eugene Register Guard* and a freelance reporter from the *Capitol Press*.

(continued on next page)

The *Register Guard* story ran on the front page with a large photo of Audrey Eldridge testing sample for nitrate. (Audrey was helping test nitrate samples while Gail Andrews was teaching the class.) The article was picked up by AP news service which resulted in a flurry of calls from radio and TV reporters.

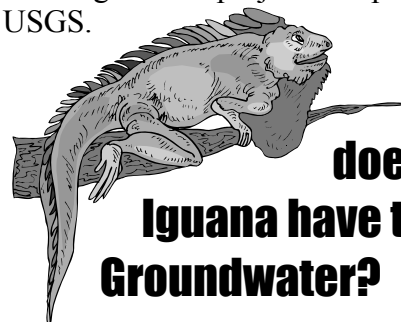
Jennifer Boudin, public information specialist with DEQ's Western Region was interviewed by Oregon Public Radio for Oregon Considered. You can read or listen to the full interview on the SWiG or OPB web sites.

Greg Aitken, the DEQ hydrogeologist who managed the 2000-2001 groundwater study, was interview by KMTR-TV in Eugene.

The *Capitol Press* article ran in the October 10 paper. It covered how to maintain wells and septic systems, as well as the groundwater management area.

Since the press doesn't notify us when they are going to run a story, we sometimes miss it. If you hear or read groundwater news, let us know. We are trying to collect clippings and web links to stories so we can share them.

interference from pumping that occurs with wells used for drinking water or irrigation. Two of the wells are on the OSU campus, and the remaining five are distributed throughout the proposed groundwater management area. Funding for this project was provided by USGS.



What does the Iguana have to do with Groundwater?

"Groundwater Management Area" gets to be a mouth full sometimes, so we tend to call it a GWMA (said gwa-ma). At a meeting someone (a state agency staff person who will remain nameless unless you ask, but hint—P.M.) said "Oh, GWMA! I thought you were saying iguana and I couldn't figure out what an iguana had to do with groundwater."

That comment gave us two things: First, it made us all aware of how much we use jargon and acronyms that may be unfamiliar to others.

And second, it gave us the iguana as our project mascot.

We have five different Iguana Cards that say "What's the difference between an Iguana and a GWMA? On the back we have the answer and our contact information.

One clever boy at the Lane County Fair pointed out that one of our iguanas was not really an iguana.

It is also interesting that the Groundwater Foundation has begun using a gecko. Just a coincidence!

New Monitoring Wells Installed

Scientists from Oregon State University and Oregon DEQ have been punching holes in the ground! This summer Jack Arendt of DEQ and Louis Arighi, an OSU graduate student, installed seven monitoring wells using a device called a push-probe. The resulting wells are all less than 28 feet deep and only 3/4 inch in diameter. These installations will allow repeated sampling of the shallow groundwater without any

BY THE NUMBERS

Recorded wells in proposed groundwater management area	5600
Samples screened for nitrate at SWiG events from August to October	425
People who signed in at GWMA Public Meetings in October	174
Septic drainfields probed for nitrate samples	10
Monitoring wells installed this fall	7
Different GWMA-Iguana Cards	5
Counties affected by proposed GWMA	3
Public comments recorded on tape at public meetings	1

How do we know where the nitrate is coming from?

That's just the question an OSU graduate student is trying to answer. Chris Vick, a student of John Selker in the Bioengineering Department has been analyzing groundwater samples from wells, septic drain fields, and agriculture lands.

About 120 people in the area with the highest nitrate levels kindly allowed to Chris collect a sample of their well water for analysis. Besides nitrate, the analysis included chloride, sulfate, bromide, and other ions. Results were mailed at the end of October.

Chris is also collecting soil samples under 10 septic systems. He hopes to identify a "signature" chemical mix that occurs under the septic systems that is distinctly different from under agricultural fields. With that information he will try to determine how much of a contribution each of the sources is making to the well water samples.

This research is funded by a DEQ 319 grant.

SWiG Contacts



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Southern Willamette Groundwater Web

<http://groundwater.oregonstate.edu/willamette>

*We welcome your comments &
invite you to join us!*

FACT BOX: *Background on the Proposed Groundwater Management Area in the Southern Willamette Valley*

According to the **Groundwater Quality Protection Act** of 1989, if groundwater nitrate levels of 7 parts per million (ppm) or more are found in a widespread area, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) must declare a **Groundwater Management Area** (GWMA).

Nitrate above natural levels is common in wells throughout the Southern Willamette Valley between Eugene and Albany. This conclusion is supported by several different groundwater studies conducted over the past ten years. During 2001 & 2002, DEQ collected well water samples to determine which areas, if any, had groundwater with nitrate above 7 ppm. *Full reports are on the SWiG web site.*

After reviewing all of the research, a group of DEQ staff concluded that a Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) needs to be declared in the Southern Willamette Valley.

The proposed GWMA does not include all of the area studied by DEQ. The proposed area is mainly along the Willamette River in parts of Lane, Linn, and Benton Counties.

For more information about the Groundwater Law and Groundwater Management Areas in Oregon, visit the DEQ web site at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/groundwa/wqgw.htm/>



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SWiG UPDATE

Newsletter for the Southern Willamette Groundwater Project

IN THIS ISSUE ---

- **Groundwater Management Area for the Southern Willamette Valley Recommended by DEQ**
- **SWiG in the News**
- **What does the Iguana have to do with Groundwater?**
- **AND MORE!**



--- READ ABOUT IT INSIDE ---

More information on the web site at:

<http://groundwater.oregonstate.edu/willamette>

About *SWiG UPDATE*

I'm producing this newsletter to keep residents, agency staff, and elected officials informed about activities in the Southern Willamette Valley related to groundwater quality.

SWiG Updates are posted on the project web site. If you would like an e-mail when a new issue is available, send me your e-mail address. If you do not have internet access, I'd be happy to mail you newsletters. My contact info is listed inside this newsletter, or write to me at the return address.

Please share this newsletter with others. If you reprint any of it in your own newsletter or elsewhere, I appreciate hearing about it.

Fell free to contact me or other SWiG project staff if you have any questions or comments.

Thanks,

Gail Andrews
OSU Extension Service