

SWiG Update

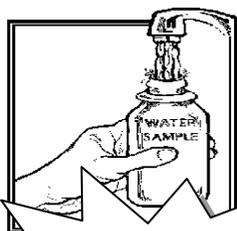
Southern Willamette Groundwater Project Newsletter

August 2003



Visit Us at the Lane County Fair

The Southern Willamette Groundwater Project Team will be sharing a booth with the **Watershed Councils of Lane County** in the **Wheeler Pavilion** at the Lane County Fair, **August 12 -17, 2003.**



Free Nitrate Tests for Well Water

SWiG staff will be on hand from **2:00 -6:00 p.m.** everyday of the fair to test your well water and discuss groundwater issues. Stop by and ask us about your well and septic system, or share your thoughts on the Groundwater Management Area.

Bring some untreated well water in a clean container to the booth and we will test it for nitrate. We don't need your name; just make sure you will recognize your jar. Our screening is less accurate than a lab test, but it will give you a good idea of your nitrate level—for most households that is all you need.

Groundwater Management Area Process Moving Forward

REVIEW FROM MAY 2003 ISSUE

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.

According to the **Groundwater Quality Protection Act** of 1989, if 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)**. See *FACT BOX* on page 3 for more details.

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.*

NEWS SINCE LAST ISSUE

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.**

DEQ staff wrote a report describing the need for a GWMA. A draft of this report was sent to agencies that will be involved in the potential GWMA in mid-July. Comments from those agencies will be considered in developing a Groundwater Management Area Declaration report that goes to the Secretary of State, probably in September.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD LIKELY THIS FALL

Under the current timeline, we are anticipating an official public comment period in October. The public comment period will be an opportunity for residents and others to have input. DEQ is charged with implementing the "Groundwater Law" (See *FACT BOX* on page 3);

(Continued on next page)

citizens are responsible to make sure that their state agencies make judgments that reflect the public's interest.

For this system of *public involvement* to work, people need a little background on the issues. The SWiG Team will offer opportunities for you to learn more about the proposed GWMA. If your group would like a presentation, please contact one of the team members listed under "Contacts" on page 3.

Well & Septic System Classes this Fall

The SWiG Project, along with our local partners, is offering FREE sessions of *Rural Living Basics: Wells and Septic Tanks*. This class is presented by OSU Extension Service. Check the SWiG web site or call Gail Andrews for more information. Registration begins September 2. Mark your calendar for a class!

- Sept. 30, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m., Lebanon
- Oct. 2, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m., Eugene
- Oct. 28, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m., Corvallis
- Oct. 29, 9:30 – Noon, Corvallis

Training For SWiG Outreach Team ---New Volunteers Welcome!

Most rural residents rely on a well for drinking water and a septic system to treat their waste. Some wells and septic systems are polluting the groundwater—the same groundwater the family is drinking. If you would like to help rural residents learn how to take better care of

their wells and septic systems, please join the SWiG Outreach Team.

Gail Andrews, coordinator of the OSU Well Water Program, is offering a 2-day intensive training for professionals and volunteers. The session on **September 16 will focus on Wells & September 23 will address Septic Systems.**

A charge of \$25 for both days or \$15 for one

session covers lunch and materials for participants *who want to work on SWiG outreach projects.* If space is available, other people may attend for \$125 for one day or \$200 for both days.

Visit the project web site or contact Gail Andrews for details—see page 3 for contact information.

NEW Septic System Rules for Oregon

DEQ is in the process of revising the state "On-site Sewage Disposal" rules.

Most rural residents have a septic tank and drainfield for their on-site sewage disposal system.

On some building sites, such as where groundwater pollution is a problem or where there are inadequate soils, a more elaborate system may be required. A sand filter is typically used in these situations, but there are many other "advanced treatment technologies." Some of these systems are much better at removing nitrate than sand filters.

The revised rules introduce *a new product approval method* and *a new permitting system* that will hopefully allow Oregonians to take advantage of the new technology available.

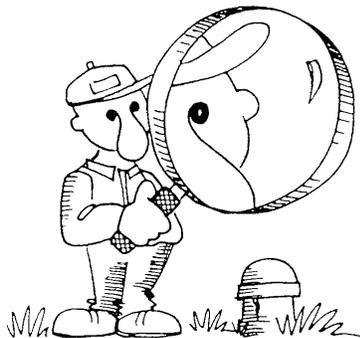
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Most rural residents use a well for drinking water and a septic system to treat their waste.

Some wells and septic systems are polluting the groundwater—the same groundwater the family is drinking!

With proper care we can protect our groundwater and your family's health.

Learn more about it!



There are other rule changes that may be of interest to rural homeowners or water quality professionals. The "On-Site Sewage Disposal" rules will be open for public comment this fall. You can learn more about these rules or how to comment from Uri Papish of DEQ at (503) 229-5013 or on the DEQ web site at: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/onsite/onsite.htm>

Lane Council of Governments Joins the SWiG Project Team

Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) was awarded a grant through Oregon DEQ to work on the Southern Willamette Groundwater Project. LCOG staff will help keep local officials informed and partner with the rest of the team on some public outreach projects.

LCOG will also create maps using GIS. For those of you who are wondering what GIS is—it is a powerful computer tool that allows maps and data from different sources to be combined for scientific analysis and visual comparison. All those fancy maps you see on the web site and in the project reports are created using GIS.

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: NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION and OREGON'S GROUNDWATER QUALITY PROTECTION LAW

Pollution from a factory or waste-water treatment plant is easy to pinpoint. We know exactly where the problem is coming from, and therefore, we can take steps to stop the pollution at its source. But what about pollution that comes from a lot of little sources like car exhausts, or garden chemicals, or household septic systems, or run-off from fields? Each individual polluter isn't much of a problem alone, but when you add up all the little contributions we end up with noticeable pollution of our water, land, and air. Because you can't identify the exact source of the pollution causing the problem, this is called **non-point source pollution**.

The 1989 Oregon Groundwater Quality Protection Law addresses groundwater polluted by non-point sources. Point source pollution is regulated by a permit system and is not the focus of this law.

According to the Groundwater Quality Protection Law, if a widespread area of groundwater has nitrate at 7 parts per million *and that pollution is suspected to be from non-point sources*, DEQ must declare a Groundwater Management Area (GWMA). When a GWMA is declared, DEQ sets up a local committee to assist various different state agencies in the development of plans to reduce groundwater pollution.

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 ---

- **Progress report on
Groundwater
Management Area
Declaration**
- **Workshops and Classes this Fall**
- **New Septic System Rules for Oregon**
- **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