

Groundwater Update

JANUARY 2000

A PUBLICATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AND THE SOUTHERN NEVADA WATER AUTHORITY

Groundwater information fair draws hundreds of well users

Approximately 300 well users from throughout the Las Vegas Valley learned about groundwater and wells at a December 1999 public information fair.

Hosted by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), the event provided an overview of the Las Vegas Valley Groundwater Management Program. Established in 1997 by the Nevada Legislature, this

program has three primary goals:

- ♦ To support activities that help protect the aquifer from potential contaminants
- ♦ To improve the management of the valley's groundwater resources by finding ways to stabilize water levels in the Las Vegas Valley, prolong the life of wells and address issues such as the shallow aquifer
- ♦ To provide well users information about the nature of the

valley's groundwater aquifer, the benefits of water conservation and the rules governing groundwater wells in Southern Nevada.

At the December event, well users received information about the quality and quantity of groundwater in the Las Vegas Valley. They also learned about several new laws passed by the

Legislature that benefit well users. The laws clarify the conditions a well must meet before the Nevada State Engineer can require the user to hook up to a municipal water supply. They also establish a financial assistance program to help any well user who is affected by the state's well connection policy in the future.

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Chris Weiss, manager of the Water Authority's Management Services Division, spoke to a full house at December's public information fair. The standing-room-only turnout of well users and owners indicated a strong interest in details of the Las Vegas Valley Groundwater Management Program.

Key topics at the information fair

- **Water Quantity**
Maintaining a stable and reliable groundwater supply for well users in the Las Vegas Valley
- **Water Quality**
Preventing contamination of the potable groundwater aquifer
- **Financial Assistance**
Providing assistance to well users who are required by the Nevada State Engineer (or who volunteer) to connect to a municipal water system

Facts about the Nevada State Engineer's Well Connection Policy

There has been no greater area of confusion among the Las Vegas Valley's well users than the Nevada State Engineer's "hook-up" rules. The policy, which was codified by the 1999 Nevada Legislature, has three requirements. All three of these requirements (shown below) must be

met before the Nevada State Engineer can require a well user to connect to a municipal water supply. If any one of these conditions does not exist, the Nevada State Engineer cannot mandate the connection. 

FACT

The well's "place of use" must be within 180 feet of a municipal water line. "Place of use" is defined as the property or properties using the well. If any part of the property or properties is within 180 feet of a municipal water line, it meets this condition.

FACT

The well must fail—that is, it must need work that requires a drill rig.

FACT

The well user must be offered financial assistance to pay up to 85 percent of the connection costs.

Again, all three of these requirements must exist for the policy to take effect.

Groundwater Update

Groundwater Update is published quarterly by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). Comments or questions should be directed to:

SNWA Public Information
1001 S. Valley View Blvd.
Las Vegas NV 89153

The SNWA was established in 1991 to address water issues on a regional, rather than local basis, and to ensure a safe, reliable water supply. The SNWA is committed to managing the region's most precious resource and developing solutions to ensure water quality and adequate future water supplies for Southern Nevada. In addition, the SNWA educates customers to use water more efficiently, promoting conservation to help ensure the long-term viability of our region's water supply. With the help of an active citizen's advisory committee, the SNWA has established an ambitious annual water conservation goal of 25 percent by year 2010.

The SNWA is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of one representative from each of the seven SNWA member agencies: the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas and North Las Vegas; the Big Bend Water District; Clark County Sanitation District and Las Vegas Valley Water District.

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Advisory committee's efforts pay off

For nearly two years, a nine-member committee—which included owners of domestic and community wells—met to identify and find solutions to the issues facing all groundwater users. This Advisory Committee for Groundwater Management, which also includes non-voting representatives from the Office of the Nevada State Engineer and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, was charged with developing recommendations relating to both groundwater quantity and quality.

Following a series of public workshops, the advisory committee



A typical domestic well

discovered an issue of great concern to well owners in the Las Vegas Valley: the Nevada State Engineer's well connection policy.

Although few well owners are likely to be affected by this policy, well owners expressed concern about the costs associated with connecting to a municipal water supply. As a result of that input, the committee proposed incorporating financial assistance for affected well users into the Groundwater Management Program. This proposal was taken to the 1999 Nevada Legislature, where it was enacted. [G](#)

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Following the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with members of the Advisory Committee for Groundwater Management, staff hydrologists and other technical experts. Display booths provided additional insight, as well as free lawn watering guides and conservation advice.

"The event was a great success," said Mike Goff, an SNWA staff member who has worked with the Advisory Committee for Groundwater Management on technical activities related to the management program. "Some people came in with the misconcep-

tion that someone was trying to take their wells, but that's not what the Las Vegas Valley Groundwater Management Program is about at all.

"Our focus is on the basin—protecting its water quality, stabilizing water levels and helping well users understand the rules governing their situation. The authority for mandating connections rests with the Nevada State Engineer, and that law is now very clear and protective of well users. I think people were happy to hear that, and to learn that our program is in place to help them." [G](#)

Advisory Committee for Groundwater Management

John Hiatt, Chairman
Domestic (private) well
representative

Ken Albright
Municipal well representative

Leo Connolly
Community well
representative

Brenda Pohlmann
Nevada Division of
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Ken Rawson
Municipal ratepayer
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Bill Starkey
Domestic (private)
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Terry Stimson
Commercial/industrial well
representative

Mike Turnipseed
Nevada State Engineer

Dirick Van Gorp
Community well
representative


You Can Prevent Groundwater Contamination

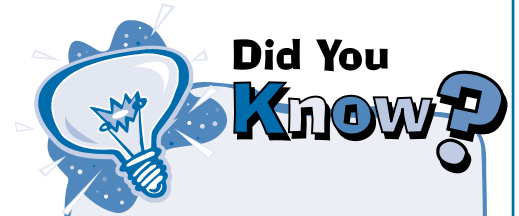
Dispose of harmful materials properly.

Don't pour hazardous materials down the drain, dump them on the ground or throw them out with the trash. Call Silver State Disposal Service at **734-5400** for information about Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Days.



Always plug and properly abandon wells. An improperly abandoned well is a direct channel for contaminants to reach groundwater. If you know of an abandoned well that isn't properly sealed, contact the Southern Nevada Water Authority at **258-7288** or the Nevada State Engineer, Division of Water Resources at **486-2770**.

Keep distance between contaminants and wells. Avoid storing, spilling or disposing of animal wastes, fuels, pesticides, fertilizers, paints and other potential contaminants within 100 feet of your well. 



Did You Know?

There are about **6,700** wells in the Las Vegas Valley.

More than **300** improperly plugged/inactive wells exist in the Las Vegas Valley.

On average, more than **6 billion** gallons of water are artificially recharged into the aquifer each year.



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