

VOLUNTEER WATER-TABLE LEVEL MONITORING PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

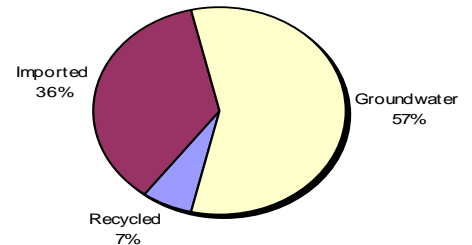
Sonoma Valley Groundwater

What is groundwater and why is it important to Sonoma Valley?

Groundwater is water below the ground surface stored in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. Groundwater is contained in formations known as aquifers, which consist of materials such as sand and gravel that are permeable (having large connected spaces between the materials that allow water to flow through). The area where water fills the aquifer is known as the saturated zone, and the top of this zone is known as the water table.

Groundwater resources have long played a significant role in the development, growth and sustainability of Sonoma Valley, with nearly 60 percent of the water demand in a given year met by local groundwater resources.

Total Water Use for Sonoma



For Year 2000

What is the Volunteer Water-Table Level Monitoring Program and why is it being undertaken?

The purpose of the Volunteer Water-Table Level Monitoring Program is to improve understanding of the groundwater basin in the Sonoma Valley. Privately-owned volunteer wells augment the network of stations tracking water-table elevations throughout Sonoma Valley. Tracking water-table elevations will help to assess the overall status of the aquifer and identify locations targeted for future recharge and conservation projects as part of the Sonoma Valley Groundwater Management Program.

Why is water-level measurement needed?

Data are insufficient to understand trends in groundwater levels basin-wide. As a result, monitoring needs to be increased across Sonoma Valley. Wells interspersed geographically and of varying depths will greatly improve understanding of the aquifer. Our long-term goal is to help prevent drops in water table elevations that would require drilling wells deeper and deeper at great expense to local landowners.

Will the monitors be measuring how much groundwater I use?

No measurement of the amount of groundwater pumped will be taken. The measurement will document the depth to groundwater in the well only.

Will someone try to curtail my groundwater use if I participate in the program?

No. The water level monitoring is a non-regulatory, voluntary program to measure seasonal and long-term changes and trends in the groundwater levels in the Sonoma Valley. Curtailing or regulating groundwater use is not the objective of the monitoring, there is no intention to assess individual groundwater use through this program, and groundwater use is not being measured as part of this program.

What are the benefits of monitoring groundwater levels?

There are many benefits to monitoring water-table levels, including:

- Assessing annual and long-term changes of groundwater in storage;
- Estimating recharge rates and where recharge occurs;
- Determining direction and gradient of groundwater flow;
- Understanding how aquifer systems work;
- Gaining insight for new well construction; and
- Providing well owners information regarding trends that influence their well's function.

How long is the monitoring program anticipated to last?

The monitoring program is not a short-term project, and will last indefinitely into the future. However, as groundwater level trends in the Sonoma Valley become better understood, the monitoring program may change in terms of number and locations of monitoring wells.

Who is eligible to participate?

Anyone who owns a well in the Sonoma Valley is encouraged to contact Tim Parker at 707/935-0235 or tparker2@slb.com to discuss whether or not their well is suitable for monitoring as part of this program. The well owner will be asked to provide information regarding the year the well was constructed and the exact location of the well. A site visit may be required to determine whether or not the well is suitable.

SONOMA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is required from me if I want to participate?

Willingness to allow a trained volunteer monitor to visit the well a couple times each year is required. Participating well owners will receive a letter indicating the frequency of the visits and other details. You will be asked to sign an access agreement that authorizes the monitor to come to the well site periodically.

If I agree to participate, what is the frequency and duration of visits?

The trained well monitor will visit the well a few times per year, most likely in the spring and fall. The volunteer will be on the property about 30 minutes for each visit to take measurements of the depth to water in your well. If requested, you can be notified in advance of each visit.

Who will be taking the water-level measurements?

Measurements require special equipment that requires training to use properly. Volunteer monitors will undergo special training with the necessary equipment and will undertake all monitoring activities. The current local volunteer monitors are: Ed Nelson, John Robb, and Al Bandur. Also, the California Department of Water Resources has been monitoring a number of wells over the past 40 years and will continue to do so.

How are well measurements taken?

Measuring groundwater levels is quite simple, but needs to be done in a consistent and objective manner to ensure results that can be tracked over time. A metal tape can be used to measure groundwater levels by inserting it between the well casing and pump column until it contacts water. The use of chalk on the lower part of the tape improves the visibility of the water line and helps verify that it has contacted the groundwater surface. The depth of water is then determined by subtracting the length of tape that was submerged in water from the total length of tape inserted in the well.

What if a well owner wants to take the water-level measurements? Will this be allowed?

If individual well owners want to measure their well, they will be encouraged to work with a trained monitor as the tools and methods required are specialized. However, training for interested parties may be made available sometime in the future – assuming funding can be secured to allow this.

How will the information collected be used?

Groundwater accounts for nearly 60 percent of all water used in Sonoma Valley and is the sole source of drinking water supply for rural domestic and other unincorporated areas not being served by urban suppliers. As such, it is desirable to be able to predict responses in the basin as a result of future actions or inaction. Collected data will be used to:

- Monitor groundwater level elevations;
- Understand the relationship and interaction between surface water and groundwater along Sonoma Creek;
- Maintain a central data management system of monitoring information; and
- Improve the reliability and accuracy of relevant computer models.

Will my privacy be protected?

Yes. The Sonoma County Water Agency will securely manage all collected information and the public will not have access to specific well information. Data will be used to create maps indicating groundwater levels, but specific well locations will not be shown or publicly available. Strict confidentiality of all collected data and of the names of those individuals participating will be maintained by Sonoma County Water Agency.

Will measurements affect my well or my water?

No.

What if a well owner decides to quit the program?

Volunteers can leave the program any time. However, gathering data over long periods of time is critical to understanding groundwater level trends. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in the program for the duration.

Will participating cost me anything?

No. There will not be any fees or costs for participating in this program.

How do I get more information or talk about participating in the program?

Please contact Tim Parker at 707/935-0235 or tparker2@slb.com for more information.