

MEETING MINUTES
GROUND WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GWAC)
September 28, 2007
Teleconference hosted at
North Mall Office Building, 725 Summer St. N.E., Ste. A
Salem, Oregon 97301

GWAC Members Present		Staff Present	Others
Paul Christensen	Greg Kupillas	Juno Pandian	Elaine Newland
Lynne Paretchan	Bob Jones	Donn Miller	John Messner
Nitin Joshi	John Stadel	Kris Byrd	Judy Messner
Jim Mack Sr		Doug Woodcock	
Merilyn Reeves		Tracy Loudon	

I. **Call to Order** – Paul Christensen, Chair

II. **Approval of Minutes for the 7/28/07 Meeting** (sic)

The Committee voted to approve the draft minutes.

III. **Update of Special Area Well Construction Standards for Pete’s Mountain, Clackamas County**

Doug Woodcock, Manager of the Ground Water Section, re-capped the administrative history on this activity that seeks to obtain better water level access on Pete’s Mountain. At the July meeting, GWAC advised that the matter be referred to the well drillers’ technical committee for input. Staff took that advice to the Commission which concurred. At this point, the issue will come before the technical committee in October. Staff expect that committee to provide valuable insights so that revised rule language could go back to the Commission meeting in November for adoption.

Merilyn asked if staff relayed to the Commission the various discussion points that GWAC reviewed at the last meeting. Juno Pandian, Manager of the Enforcement Section, read from the staff report which indicated that there had been much discussion by GWAC in its deliberations. Merilyn noted that the issue of water level measurability in wells was bigger than Pete’s Mountain and proposed that it come back as a topic in the future. Control over the activity of pump installers to facilitate measurability is an important feature of this issue.

Elaine Newland, a Pete’s Mountain resident, said the area needs action on measurement soon. Local tension is running high and a resolution is needed.

IV. **Update on Consideration of a Special Water Management Problem Area (SWAMPA) Designation for Eola Hills Ground Water Limited Area, Polk County**

Doug Woodcock explained the background of this item. The Commission directed staff to hold a hearing to determine if a SWAMPA exists in the Eola Hills GWLA. The public comment period has ended. Doug said that the hearing went well and that most of the testimony was anecdotal. Many people commented that they were concerned with their wells, that they had had no well problems personally, and that they had heard of others who had water supply problems.

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Doug is reviewing the public comment. He noted that several ground water staff are currently contributing to a research effort. That work includes studying the impact of ground water development on spring discharge.

Lynne asked about water use monitoring. Doug reported that certain permitted uses are well documented but the bulk of the use is exempted and is not monitored. Lynne suggested that meters would be wise. Doug said that a SWAMPA could require metering and reporting of all users.

In response to Paul's question, Doug confirmed that no SWAMPA has yet been established in Oregon. Paul said that we would all be in a learning mode and noted that meter quality can be highly variable.

Merilyn observed that data is lacking for the area. This was evident from the hearing testimony. Cooperation with the county and training citizens is a way to increase data collection.

John observed that water level measurement requires enough skill to prevent false readings. He urged that any public training be thorough enough to provide the skill for accurate data collection. Doug shared this concern. The data needs to be validated. Bob commented that the water level status is also an important part of data collection since an accurate level could still reflect pumping, recovery, static or other conditions.

Doug shared that one of the Water resources Commissioners suggested the use of Sea Grant funding to educate local residents in the collection of ground water data. Doug will be looking into this possibility.

Jim asked if meters would be inspected for proper installation. Juno said that they would.

Doug confirmed that this is an informational report and that no recommendation is sought from GWAC.

Nitin asked that GWAC receive an update before the item goes to the Commission in late November. Others agreed to a single agenda item meeting. Nitin requested update materials in advance.

Paul is frustrated that GWAC is not able to advise the Commission based on complete information since GWAC is only able to advise during the public comment period. Written comments and staff analysis are not available to GWAC for its deliberations.

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V. Status of Start Card Fund

Tracy Loudon, Administrator of the Administrative Services Division, referred to a handout that displayed actual start card fund expenditures for the biennium of July 2005 to June 2007. It showed that \$939,000 or 75% went to field enforcement, \$251,000 or 20% went to technical services, and \$67,000 or 5% went to administration. Another chart displayed 12-month moving averages of expenditures and revenues since July 2002. The current fund balance is about \$400,000, providing an assurance of fund solvency for the next 3-4 years. On average, about 400 to 500 start cards are issued per month.

Greg asked for a description of the technical work that was funded by the start card fund. Doug Woodcock noted that the Ground Water Section provides support on well construction for the Enforcement Section and that the data center performs database work.

Jim asked where field equipment costs were located on the chart. Tracy said that about \$200,000 of the field and enforcement expenditure was equipment costs.

In response to John, Tracy said that start card issuance in 2006 ran higher than it has in 2007.

Tracy promised to provide a chart/table to show start card numbers by well type (water well or monitor well).

Tracy told Jim that the start card fund is doing fine now but, if revenues decline, the Department will decrease resources to the program over time.

Juno told Paul that inspections statewide have been about 25% of new construction. Inspectors typically collect GPS coordinates on their well inspections.

Tracy noted that even with the start card fee increase a few years ago, inflation will eventually pressure the cost of doing business at current levels. He estimates that it will be several years before another start card increase will be needed. Jim said that he preferred gradual fee increases rather than one large one.

The conversation moved into inspection data and its availability to the public. The current inspection database is an internal WRD database. Paul and Greg are interested that some inspection data be made available to the public by merging with GRID, the existing on-line well log database. The GPS location was the primary information but static water levels were also important. Juno said that she would look into this possibility. Kris Byrd, Well Construction Specialist, indicated that the well inspection reports are tightly held by WRD and not even available to landowners. Further, GRID is currently a database that is limited to well information that only drillers provide.

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Lynne was concerned about the confidentiality of well inspection information. Juno said that start cards enjoy a statutory confidentiality for one year. Tracy cited the business value of the inspection information as a reason for confidentiality. Juno noted that inspections are based on the start card, providing another reason for confidentiality. Kris cited ORS 537.762 as the authority for confidentiality. Lynne wonders if WRD's understanding of the statute might be overly broad. She would like GWAC or perhaps the drillers' technical committee to examine the issue in the future. Juno said that she would look at the appropriateness of confidentiality of inspection data.

Jim asked whether the average citizen could get a list of inspected wells. Juno said that such a list was not available.

Unscheduled Item – Legislative Concept Letter

Greg raised the issue of the draft legislative concept letter concerning splitting of ground water permits. The issue was discussed at several previous meetings. This draft letter was approved by all GWAC members in attendance except Marilyn. Paul will sign the letter as written and send it to the Commission.

VII. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Audio-files of the meeting are available.