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North and East Metro Groundwater Management Area Update

July 28, 2023

The advisory group for the [North and East Metro Groundwater Management Area](#) (GWMA) met Tuesday, June 27 at the Boatworks Commons Community Room in White Bear Lake.

The public meeting included a number of updates, including:

- Lake and groundwater levels.
- Water conservation and efficiency efforts by water appropriation permit holders.
- A proposed plan for a White Bear Lake Area Water Supply workgroup.
- North Oaks Company planning to connect some City of North Oaks residents to St. Paul Regional Water Services water supplies.
- 3M settlement PFAS remediation planning.
- Minnesota Statute changes for DNR water regulations by the 2023 legislature.
- A brief update on the contested case hearings related to the Ramsey County District Court Order.
- Well interferences in the Blaine and Ham Lake area.

DNR Inventory, Monitoring and Analysis Section Manager Jason Moeckel opened the meeting with a review of groundwater and lake levels in the North and East Metro GWMA. Moeckel shared how the hydrographs of water levels are relatively similar over the last 30 years, with highs and lows occurring around the same dates.

Following Moeckel's brief presentation, GWMA Project Manager Dan Miller shared water use data and water conservation and efficiency efforts by water appropriation permit holders in the GWMA. Miller noted that many public water suppliers have made water conservation and efficiency a key part of their operations. Miller highlighted a project by Bailey Nurseries to reuse water at a farm in Cottage Grove. Once complete, it may save up to 20 million gallons of groundwater a year.

Metropolitan Council Water Resources Engineer, Greg Johnson, presented a plan based on legislation passed during the 2023 session. Johnson explained the legislation, which directs the Met Council to ensure communities in the White Bear Lake area have access to sufficient drinking water to allow for municipal growth while also ensuring the sustainability of surface and groundwater resources for future generations. Johnson described the steps to develop the plan, including likely opportunities for participation.

Don Pereira, Director of Conservation Programs with the North Oaks Company, shared that the city of North Oaks is evaluating the possibility of extending St. Paul Regional Water Service's distribution network to reach the city. Pereira explained that the city and community members feel it is important to have an alternative supply to private domestic wells, based on the groundwater sustainability concerns in the area.

Before the midpoint break in the meeting, Rebecca Higgins, Professional Geologist with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, presented about the 3M settlement work to remediate groundwater contamination in the East Metro. Specifically, Higgins described the plan to install a well array to help reduce polluted groundwater in the area for residents.

To start the second half of the meeting, DNR Conservation Assistance and Regulations Section Manager Randall Doneen provided an update on legislative changes to water regulations in Minnesota Statute 103G. Changes included language about compliance and enforcement tools, groundwater and surface water interactions, permit fees, and engagement and coordination with tribal nations. Doneen added that the contested case hearings are continuing based on minor changes to the Ramsey County District Court Order in 2022.

DNR Groundwater Technical Analysis Supervisor Ellen Considine wrapped up the meeting by discussing the well interference investigation and analysis the DNR recently completed in the Blaine and Ham Lake area. The DNR received a number of out-of-water complaints from domestic well owners in the summer of 2022 and learned the city of Blaine was pumping from three new wells that were not authorized on their active water appropriation permit. The city complied with the notice from the DNR to stop pumping from the three new wells, and the DNR began investigating why residents were going out of water. The DNR determined that 47 of 50 complaints were valid, with the City of Blaine's high capacity pumping as the primary reason. Two golf courses in the area were also minor contributors for two domestic well owner complaints. At the end of the initial negotiation period (July 27, 2023), the city of Blaine had decided to manage the negotiations on its own and had settled with 45 of

the 47 complainants for the cost to restore each of their water supplies. The remaining cases will be settled through a formal process involving the DNR.

There were a number of questions asked and lively discussions before and during the meeting, during the break and following the meeting.

Presentations provided during the meeting can be reviewed on the [DNR North and East Metro GWMA webpage](#).

Project web page: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/gwmp/area-ne.html>

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The North & East Metro Groundwater Management Area advisory team was established to provide ongoing insights to the DNR as it implements a five-year plan approved in November 2015. The plan will continue to guide the DNR's approach to groundwater management in the north and east metro and provide a framework within which the DNR will work with water users to ensure that groundwater supplies remain adequate to meet human needs, while protecting lakes, streams and wetlands. The plan covers all of Ramsey and Washington Counties, along with portions of Anoka and Hennepin.



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