

Resolved: The New Hope Town Board supports the results of the January 2017 Portage County Groundwater Management Plan written by the Citizens Groundwater Action Committee (GCAC) and urges the County Board to adopt their plan recommendations as the basis for action on maintaining and improving healthy groundwater supplies in Portage County. To this end, the Board also supports the efforts of a GCAC subcommittee to write a new Portage County Groundwater Ordinance that will codify these suggestions into action that will protect this resource.

The GCAC plan, after eight years of research, identified increased pumping by high capacity wells as the single leading contributor to a documented decline in groundwater and surface water levels, especially in areas where wells for agricultural use are most concentrated in the County. The Little Plover River Study by the USGS and UWEX (2017) was cited as the latest example of fifty years of studies tracking this trend. It identified the large volume pumped (avg. 17 million gallons) and short time frame of agricultural pumping as especially detrimental to surface waters in the short term. Long term effects of increased pumping over the last five years has resulted in a 2 to 6 foot cumulative drop in groundwater levels in the County, that even abundant rainfall of the last few years could not displace. Increasing high cap well installations will further lower the groundwater supplies, so measuring the cumulative impact of wells is critical.

On groundwater quality, GCAC identified nitrates as a major health concern in Portage County groundwater. Currently 19% of county wells tested are above the dangerous 10 mg/L level, more than double the state average for nitrates. The GCAC study recognized that the porous sand and gravel soils of Portage County allow nitrates to pass through quickly into groundwater for greater relative accumulation of nitrates than in heavier soils. In addition, recent studies in the report were cited showing severe health problems identified with water with less than 5mg/L levels (over 75% of county wells). The WGCC (Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council) reports that approximately 90% of all nitrate-N inputs to groundwater originate from agricultural sources. Crops like corn metabolize only 35% of nitrogen applied in sandy/gravel soils because applied nitrogen moves rapidly through a shallow root level, allowing unused nitrates to filter into groundwater easily. By comparison, crops with deep root systems like alfalfa and other traditional pasture crops prevent nitrate contamination into groundwater because they fully utilize nitrates applied to the soil. Municipal and private wastes are other sources of nitrates.

Other contaminants were identified in Portage County groundwater by the GCAC report, including pesticides, industrial chemicals and heavy metals from municipal sludge. Levels of each material applied in the County were quantified and actions that should be considered to reduce these dangers to public health are suggested in the 80 page report. In addition numerous maps and charts are included for clarity. The full report can be seen at:

<http://www.co.portage.wi.us/home/showdocument?id=7093>

Date: March 15, 2017

Town Chairman: *Daniel Zabrowski*

Town Supervisor: *Todd Kuepfer*

Town Supervisor: *Ann Perobobaty*