

SPOKANE COUNTY WATER AVAILABILITY ADVISORY GROUP

Wednesday, February 29, 2012

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Spokane Regional Health District Auditorium

1101 W College Ave

Spokane, WA

MEETING SUMMARY

Attending:

Rob Lindsay, <i>Spokane County</i>	Mike Hermanson, <i>Spokane County</i>
Mike Lithgow, <i>Pend Oreille County</i>	Ty Wick, <i>SAJB</i>
Susan McGeorge, <i>Whitworth Water</i>	Jeanne Barnes, <i>Spokane Assoc. of Realtors</i>
Jim Kolva, <i>Jim Kolva Associates</i>	Charlie Kessler, <i>Stevens Co. Conservation District</i>
Joe Foote, <i>Murray, Smith & Associates</i>	Walt Edelen, <i>Spokane Conservation District</i>
Doug Greenland, <i>City of Spokane</i>	John Covert, <i>WDOE</i>
Katherine Rowden, <i>Nat'l. Weather Service</i>	Rusty Post, <i>WDOE</i>
Jonathan Rudders, <i>Geo Engineers</i>	Steve Skipworth, <i>LLSWD</i>
Harley Douglass, <i>Land Owner</i>	Jim Brown, <i>Staff to Spokane BOCC</i>
Steve Davenport, <i>Spokane County Planning</i>	Karen Skoog, <i>Stevens Co. Farm Bureau</i>
Tom Hormel, <i>Spokane Assoc. of Realtors</i>	Miina Skoog, <i>Citizen</i>
Dave Andersen, <i>WA Dept. of Commerce</i>	Kitty Klitzke, <i>Futurewise</i>
Steven Holderby, <i>Spokane Regional Health District</i>	Dwight Hume, <i>Land Use Solutions and Entitlement</i>
Alene Lindstrand, <i>Realtor</i>	Rachael Osborn, <i>CELP</i>
Suzy Dix, <i>Farmer/Realtor</i>	Susan Gulick, <i>Sound Resolutions (Facilitator)</i>

1. Spokane County Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Rob Lindsay opened the meeting by welcoming the Advisory Group members and thanking everyone for participating.

2. Review Operating Procedures

- The Advisory Group reviewed and accepted the proposed operating procedures and ground rules.

3. Overview of Water Availability and Sustainability Issues

- Mike Hermanson of Spokane County provided an overview of water availability and sustainability issues. His presentation is attached as a separate document.
- Some key points from the presentation include:
 - Spokane County would like the Advisory Group to review the current water availability standard and offer advice and recommendations on whether it can be improved. The underlying question is whether there are better methods to evaluate water availability and sustainability that are technically sound, cost effective and legally defensible.
 - The focus of our discussion will be on the *physical* availability of water—not legal availability.
 - There are significant hydro-geologic variations in Spokane County. The parts of the county that draw from the Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer are

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more than adequately supplied with water. However, other areas that draw from smaller aquifers can face seasonal variations in water availability or see steady declines in water availability as more wells are drilled.

- Mike distributed a map that noted locations of wells with reported water quantity problems. This is just a sample of problems—it does not depict all the wells with water quantity concerns.
- The current requirement that must be met prior to receiving a building permit is 1 gallon per minute or 1440 gallons per day (gpd), as shown through a 4 hour pump test.
- In Kittitas County, the basin is now closed to new wells because they were impacting the water availability of existing water users. Senior water rights holders filed a petition to stop allowing additional water withdrawals from the basin. Ecology responded to the petition by withdrawing the basin from further withdrawals, including permit exempt wells. Spokane County would like to address the issue of water availability before the situation gets that bad.
- The Little Spokane River Basin is closed to new water rights, but new exempt wells continue to go in. This could now change with the Kittitas precedent.
- The Advisory Group discussed the information presented.
- Ty Wick described his personal story of building a home and having ample water for household use but seeing his water flow dramatically reduced in the summer when he used a sprinkler system for outdoor irrigation.
- In general, when a well goes dry and a home is not habitable, the homeowner must pay the cost to extend water lines from a public water purveyor or have water hauled to their home. Water purveyors do not have endless supplies of water; they are limited by their own water rights and the physical availability of their water supplies.
- There are no standards or requirements on well depth—this is up to the property owner and the well driller.
- To definitively determine the sustainability of a given aquifer you would need to do a comprehensive hydrogeological study. This is prohibitively expensive for an individual home builder. Are there other methods or standards that could be used that are affordable and provide a decent assessment of water availability and sustainability?
- There are more and more hydro-geo studies being completed in the region that can help, but they cover broad areas and would need to be supplemented to make determinations on individual wells or groups of wells.
- Should there be different standards for indoor use and outdoor use?
- Should there be different standards for different hydrogeological conditions?
- There is a great need for education. Purchasers of land or existing homes need to see strong disclaimers that there is no guarantee that water will be available indefinitely (“Buyer Beware”). Education is also needed to inform water users of the potential impacts of their water use on their neighbors.

4. Overview of the Advisory Group’s Tasks and Schedule

- The Advisory Group reviewed the meeting schedule and tasks.
- The purpose of the Advisory Group is to review the current water availability standard for Spokane and provide advice or recommendations to Spokane County staff on potential changes or improvements.

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- The Advisory Group will explore the criteria that should be considered in developing a water availability standard as well as investigation methods required to meet potential standards.
- At the next meeting the Advisory Group will review what is being done in other jurisdictions and will begin developing options for further evaluation and consideration.
- Spokane County will provide the group with a map depicting water system boundaries in Spokane County.
- The Advisory Group would like more clarity on the specific tasks requested of the Advisory Group and what will be done as a result of Advisory Group recommendations. There was also a request for more detail on the current process of decision-making regarding water availability within Spokane County

5. Upcoming Meetings

- *Thursday, March 29, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.*
- *Thursday, April 26, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.*
- *Thursday, May 10, 2:00-4:00 p.m.*
- *Thursday, May 24, 2:00-4:00 p.m.*
- *Thursday, June 14, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.*
- *Thursday, June 18, 28 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.*