# Spokane County Water Availability Advisory Group Draft Recommendations

5/17/12

# Regional Studies to Better Assess Long Term Sustainability and Potential Impacts on Senior Water Users and Surface Water

#### **Issues**

The availability of water for a new home or subdivision is dependent on the water resources of the basin in which it is located. An understanding of the water resources of an area at the basin scale is essential to determine the availability of water in specific locations, the impact of a new use on existing water users in the basin, and the long term sustainability of the water resource in the basin. An understanding of the water resources at the basin scale include such things as:

- identification of the extent and connection of aquifers in the basin,
- the direction of ground water flow,
- recharge pathways,
- surface and ground water interactions
- long term water level trends

The study of water resources at the basin scale is expensive and occurs over an extended period of time; therefore it is not practical or equitable to place the burden of a regional water resource study on any one applicant. Rural residents of Spokane County would benefit from a better understanding of water resources at the basin scale, both to assure new development has adequate water and that existing water users are not impaired. It is a question of cost vs. benefit.

### **Current Practices**

Since the late 1800s the USGS, State of Washington, academic institutions, private industry, and local government have conducted various water resource studies in Spokane County. Currently the State of Washington is providing funding for basin wide water resources studies through the Watershed Planning program. Certain areas of the County, such as the Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer and the Spokane River, have been studied extensively while other areas of the County have been studied very little. Much of the information is not readily available and usable by the public.

## **Options**

- 1) Implement a long term ground water level monitoring network to assess the ability of the water resources within a basin to meet current and future needs.
- 2) Continue basin wide water resource studies that improve the ability to assess water availability and sustainability for current and future residents.
- 3) Develop a publicly accessible and user friendly water resource data library focused on providing information pertinent to determining the availability and sustainability of water resources for current and future rural residents of Spokane County.

#### **Potential Recommendations**

1) The Advisory Group recommends that Spokane County develop user-friendly access to past hydro-geological studies.

- 2) The Advisory Group recommends that Spokane County and other entities continue to expand the understanding of water availability and sustainability within Spokane County, particularly for basins where information is limited.
- 3) The Advisory Group recommends that Spokane County evaluate the feasibility of developing and implementing a long term groundwater level monitoring program.

