

Scatter Creek Aquifer – Septic System Management Project

Purpose: To make sure water in the Scatter Creek Aquifer is safe to drink now and in the future.

Citizen's Committee notes: October 2, 2013, 6:15-8:15 pm. *Approved 12/4/13.*
Rochester School District Board Room, 10140 Highway 12 SW, Rochester, WA 98579

Attending: Gene Weaver, Tom Budsberg, Marlene Hampton, Maureen Pretell, Amanda Neice – alternate, Sandra Adix, Lowell Deguise, Bruce Morgan, Art Starry (staff). **Facilitator:** Jane Mountjoy-Venning (staff). **Note taker:** Kateri Wimsett (staff). **Excused:** Karen Deal. **Guests:** none. **Absent:** Chanele Shaw, Roger Max, Dave Dafoe, Scott Schimelfenig.

Introductions

Agenda review and approval: approved.

Approve September notes: After a clarifying question, the September notes were approved.

Other housekeeping: Jane announced that she would no longer bring the filled-up flip charts with past notes. She will keep these as reference for the project duration, and is happy to bring them upon request if we want to refer to the original flip chart notes.

Model Prioritization Decision: The committee decided modeling scenario priorities with the understanding that health department staff and Nadine Romero, hydrogeologist, will consult to determine what is feasible. We did not prioritize within each priority group, in other words the order a scenario appears in its group is not significant.

- The first priority scenarios to model are:
 - The aquifer area at 100% build-out under current regulations, with as accurate placement of future development in the model as possible.
 - Maximum contaminant contribution from the Tenino Wastewater Treatment facility, under their current wastewater discharge permit.
 - Estimate of maximum contaminant contribution from the Tenino Wastewater Treatment facility, under potential expansion of permit discharge based on City of Tenino's water rights.
 - The aquifer area at 100% build-out assuming 1 home/septic per 1 acre (1:1).
- The next highest priority scenarios to model are:
 - The aquifer area at 50% build-out under current regulations, with as accurate placement of future development in the model as possible.
 - Estimate the total non-septic nitrogen contribution to the aquifer from sources such as manure (pets, livestock, wildlife) and fertilizer.
- The 3rd priority scenarios to model are:
 - The aquifer at 100% build-out assuming 1 home/septic per 5 acres (1:5).
 - Contribution from the expected additional capacity for schools in the aquifer area.
 - The aquifer area at 100% build-out under current regulations, assuming clustered homes with open space for new development.
 - Historic look - estimate the aquifer condition had zoning remained unchanged since the early 1970s

- Estimate the nitrogen contribution to the aquifer from manure.
- Impact on nitrate levels in aquifer with less water withdraw from fish farm, i.e the new current gallons being withdrawn.
- Impact of nitrate levels in aquifer with maximum permitted water withdraw from aquifer.
- Finally, the scenarios it would be nice to model if time and resources allow. The top 4 were considered highest priority by at least one committee member:
 - The aquifer area at 100% build-out under current regulations, assuming even spacing (not clustering) in new development.
 - Schools – model advanced nitrogen-reducing septic treatment for school(s)
 - The aquifer area at 100% build-out assuming 1 home/septic per 20 acres (1:20).
 - Impact of nitrogen-reducing technology for septic systems
 - Historic – what caused the conditions today
 - Impact of extending sewer to hot spots
 - Schools – model connecting school(s) to sewer
 - Estimate the non-septic nitrogen contribution to the aquifer from wildlife.
 - Estimate the non-septic nitrogen contribution to the aquifer from fertilizer.

Points brought up in the discussion:

- The big question to try to answer is how much development (where and what kind) can occur to keep the aquifer within a “reasonable level” of safe, clean drinking water?
- What can we do in the future without creating a problem, or to keep it as manageable as possible?
- It is important to make the scenarios being modeled as real as possible, so we can best determine whether there is a problem. We want to look realistically as long range as we possibly can.
- We will use current county zoning to show possible areas of growth in the future. We will also meet with the county planners to get their insight into what is current and where and what kind of possible future development is likely.
- While considering priorities the question were any schools associated with “hot spots?” The answer is no, not so far.

Questions for Nadine:

- Can we calculate the saturation point, or how fast the aquifer flushes out?

Decision: Yes, the committee would like county staff to help verify calculations of how many lots/septic systems might have been in the area if plans, regulations, and policies had remained unchanged over the past 40 years. After an inquiry was made into budget, the request was amended to do what is reasonable within the constraints of time and budget.

Discussion about request from Gene Weaver (letter dated 9/4/13):

- Gene clarified that he was not anticipating modeling a scenario based on a look at what if the zoning in place in the 1970s had remained. He was asking that the committee consider asking county staff to help verify calculations of how many lots/septic systems might have been in the area if plans, regulations, and policies had remained unchanged over the past 40 years. He wants the public to know that we have been working on protecting water quality in the aquifer for many years, and the water is improving.

- Others on the committee thought modeling such a scenario would be a graphic example that decisions have results. This might be helpful for the Board of Health and others if the Board moves into rulemaking for the aquifer area.
- This scenario was one of the ones considered in the earlier prioritization work, and came out in the 3rd priority level.
- Staff will list assumptions being made when verifying calculations of how many lots/septic systems might have been in the area if plans, regulations, and policies had remained unchanged over the past 40 years.

Looking ahead to future meetings including a report of recommendations to Board.

- Jane checked in with committee members to see if they were able to continue serving beyond December. We originally anticipated wrapping up committee work by December, but Jane did not fully comprehend the time needed for the modeling process.
- **Committee homework: Think about other plans or reports and the features you liked or found effective. Consider ideas for the structure of our eventual report to the Board of Health/ Board of County Commissioners.**
- The homework assignment fostered a discussion about what happens to our recommendations after they are made. The short answer is the appropriate policy makers (Board of Health, Board of Commissioners, etc.) will determine how/if our plan and policy recommendations are implemented. Some recommendations might require referral to and action by other agencies or policy makers (like the planning commission), who will need to go through their own policy making process. Some examples include:
 - Change to type or to operations and maintenance of septic system requirements would need the Board of Health to make changes to the sanitary code.
 - Change in zoning would require the Board of Commissioners and the Planning Commission to take action.
- There was a question as to whether requirements around agriculture zones or dairy waste would be effected. Answer – the project is looking at septic systems. It will be up to this committee to develop the recommendations.
- The second community workshop will take place when we have modeling results and a list of options under consideration. Input from that meeting will also help shape the committee's final recommendations to the Board of Health/Board of Commissioners.

Public Comment: none

Wrap up: The next meeting will be after we have model results from some of the suggested scenarios. Assume it will be in November, but depending on the complexity, the next meeting may not occur until December. Jane will let the committee know.