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: February 6, 2013, 6:15-8:15 pm. *Approved 3/6/13.*
Rochester School District Board Room, 10140 Highway 12 SW, Rochester, WA 98579

Attending: Tom Budsberg, Art Starry (staff), Maureen Pretell, Gene Weaver, Lowell Deguise, Karen Deal, Marlene Hampton, Roger Max, Dave Dafoe. Speakers: Ginny Stern and Koenraad Marien, WA Dept. of Health. Facilitator: Jane Mountjoy-Venning (staff). Note taker: Steve Petersen (staff). Guests: Amanda Neice (alternate), Heather Saunders (staff attending as member of public), and Karen Johnson. Missing: Chanele Shaw, Sandra Adix, Scott Schimelfenig.

Introductions
Agenda review and approval: approved.
Approve January notes:

- Approved with the addition of this sentence to the discussion section: "*It was clarified that the boundary shown on the map is the boundary of the aquifer study area. It is not the boundary of the entire Scatter Creek aquifer."*

Other housekeeping:

- The dump site mentioned during citizen comments at the January meeting is under enforcement proceedings. A civil infraction was issued on 1/16/13.
- The Chehalis Tribe DNR has been added to the committee e-mail list and will receive all mailings sent to the committee. They are invited and welcome to join the committee or attend meetings.
- The next meeting on March 6 will be on septic systems.
- We are still looking for a location for the April meeting.

Report on any community input, questions, etc.

- There was a question and brief discussion about the expected life of a septic system, due to a problem with an 8-year old system. This was held until the March meeting which will be on septic systems.

How clean is clean? - Health effects from wastewater contaminants in groundwater, and drinking water regulatory standards: Ginny Stern, hydrogeolgist and Koenraad Marien, toxicologist – both from WA Department of Health gave a presentation and answered questions. The presentation slides will be posted on the website.

Major points in presentation:

- While state and local health departments regulate drinking water, it is the water system operator or individual well owner who is responsible for ensuring safe water is delivered to the tap.

- There are different levels of regulation depending on the size of the water system. Individual wells do not have any requirement for ongoing water testing, though we recommend annual testing for bacteria and nitrates.
- The maximum contaminant levels (MCL), that is the amount of a contaminant in drinking water that is considered safe, is the same, no matter the size of the water system. The regulatory difference has to do with how frequently testing is required.
- The maximum contaminant level for nitrate is 10 mg/l.
- The maximum contaminant level for coliform bacteria is 1, in other words there should not be any coliform bacteria present in drinking water.
- There are links on the project website to more details about nitrates, coliform bacteria, and drinking water testing.
- Sources of nitrate in groundwater are typically human and animal waste, and fertilizer from agriculture and landscape maintenance activities.
- While nitrogen-fixing plants such as scotch broom, alder, peas, etc contribute nitrogen to the soil, they are not usually a contribution to nitrate in groundwater.
- Nitrates are particularly a problem for infants and some adults such as those with anemia. High nitrates can cause methemoglobinemia or “blue baby syndrome” because nitrate interferes with the ability of blood to carry oxygen. More details are on the nitrate fact sheet on the website.

Public Comment: none

Wrap up

- Review any tasks/commitments & timeframe
- Review notes, capture any missing points