

More about the Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

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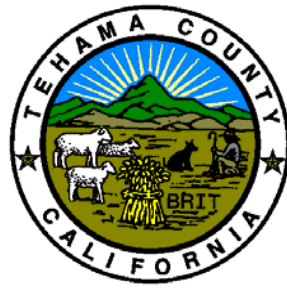
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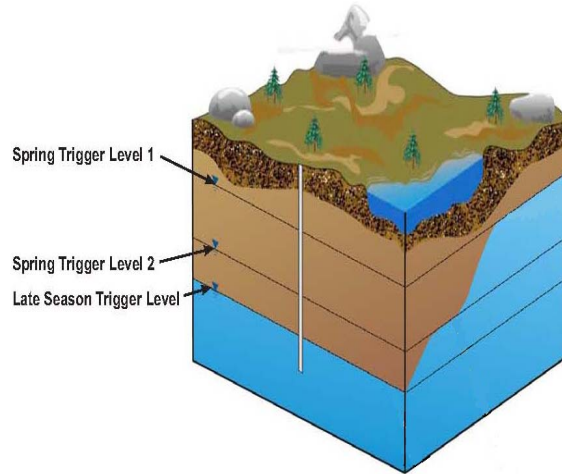
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Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

9380 San Benito Ave.
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<http://tehamacountywater.ca.gov>



Groundwater Trigger Levels and Awareness Actions for Tehama County



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Overview

by Allan Fulton, UC Cooperative Extension, Tehama County

From 1970 to 1990 reliance on groundwater in Tehama County increased from about 30 to 65 percent to meet total water demands. Today, groundwater use remains predominant. Concerns with surface water supply reliability, changing land use, local and statewide growth, and increased environmental water use have contributed to greater dependence on groundwater. This shift to groundwater coupled with concerns about water transfers out of Tehama County in 1992 provided incentive to develop a county-wide Groundwater Management Plan (Plan) beginning in about 1995. In 1998, after considerable public input and review, a Plan was adopted by the Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

The Plan addresses complex groundwater issues in Tehama County and as a result employs a careful approach that seeks to implement groundwater management as appropriate. The District works to guide and facilitate implementation of the Plan. The District has a five member elected Board of Directors (who also set as the Tehama County Board of Supervisors), county staff including a Water Resources Manager with office and field staff to provide oversight and support to implement the Plan. The District's support of the Plan is funded within existing county budget allocations and supplemented with funds from competitive grant programs. Since the Plan has been adopted, some important milestones have been accomplished:

- Since 1998, appointment of a nine member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Committee members are nominated through a public process, represent a broad cross-section of interests, serve a three year term, and provide external review and guidance in implementing the Plan.
- From 1998 to 2007, a network to monitor groundwater levels and quality has expanded. Today groundwater levels and/or groundwater quality is measured at least semi-annually in about 190 agricultural, domestic, or dedicated monitoring wells. In 2008, the District developed a land subsidence monitoring network and completed the first survey of land elevations.
- In 2003, the District completed a Water Inventory and Analysis to understand past, present, and future water needs in the county (available on line at <http://tehamacountywater.ca.gov>).

The District and the TAC are currently undertaking a public process of developing groundwater “trigger levels” in accordance with the Plan. “Trigger levels” are non-regulatory. They are intended to create an awareness of fluctuations in groundwater conditions within Tehama County over time and develop a set of actions to inform water users of the conditions and potential management needs in the county. You are invited to participate in this public process of developing these initial trigger levels. More information is provided in this brochure to help you identify opportunities to participate in this important process..

Trigger Level and Awareness Action Concept

Types of Trigger Levels

When it comes to groundwater extraction, there are three primary elements to manage and protect: 1) acceptable levels of groundwater withdrawal; 2) degradation of the groundwater quality; and 3) land subsidence. Land subsidence is the lowering of the ground surface when too much groundwater extraction occurs and it can damage infrastructure such as canals, wells, and levees.

To achieve protection of groundwater storage, groundwater quality, and prevention of land subsidence, the Plan calls for setting trigger levels for these types of groundwater conditions. The “trigger level” process tracks groundwater conditions, creates an awareness of fluctuations in groundwater conditions within Tehama County over time, and develops a set of awareness actions to inform local water users of the conditions and potential management needs in the county. Other northern Sacramento Valley counties such as Glenn and Butte Counties have adopted similar processes that are often referred to as Basin Management Objectives.

Approach to Developing Trigger Levels

Since this is the first effort to set trigger levels in accordance with the Plan and the desire is to achieve effective public review and feed back, the initial effort will give priority to setting trigger levels for groundwater levels. The task of setting trigger levels for groundwater quality and land subsidence will be undertaken in a separate process after trigger levels for groundwater levels have been established and approved. The District and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) have incorporated three fundamental principles in their approach to developing trigger levels: 1) use of science-based monitoring and data evaluation;

2) a commitment to an ongoing local development process that enables public review and input by interested parties; and 3) acknowledgement that trigger levels may need adjustment as experience and knowledge is gained from monitoring and data evaluation.

An approximate timeline for development of trigger levels is to distribute a background document and technical memorandums specifically for 12 sub-basins within the valley floor of Tehama County during the winter of 2008-09. Shortly thereafter, the District and TAC will begin to initiate outreach in each sub-basin by facilitating public workshops and being available to meet with water users and interested parties upon request. The District and TAC recognize that it will require multiple and repeat efforts since the groundwater resources consist of 12 different sub-basins. It is also understood that water users and interested parties may desire to have time to review the background document and technical memorandums independently of the District and TAC before offering comment. As a result of these considerations, the timeline for incorporating local comment toward the development of trigger levels may extend well into 2009.

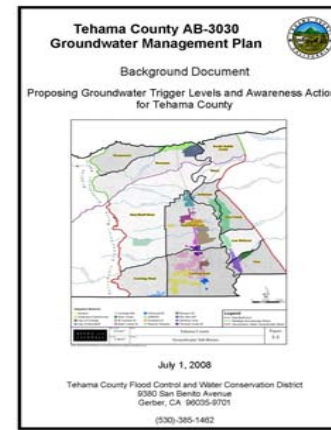
How to Participate

Copies of the **Background Document** and **Technical Memorandums** are available on line at the District’s website: <http://tehamacountywater.ca.gov>. A limited number of printed copies are available due to costs. Contact the District to check on their availability.

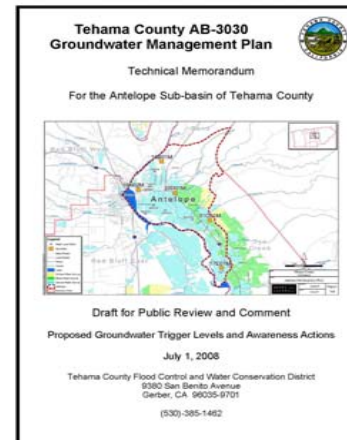
To get started review a copy of the **Background Document**. It will give an overview of the Tehama County Groundwater Management Plan including:

- An introduction to groundwater management in Tehama County;
- A more in-depth review of the “Trigger Level” concept;
- A description of the method used by the District and the TAC to propose initial trigger levels for groundwater levels; and

- Context on the countywide and regional groundwater setting that the District and TAC has considered while working to implement the Plan.



Next, review the **Technical Memorandums** for your area(s) of interest. The Technical Memorandums have been developed by the District and TAC for 12 unique groundwater sub-basins making up the valley floor in Tehama County.



The sub-basins include:

- Antelope
- Bowman
- Bend
- Corning East
- Corning West
- Dye Creek
- Los Molinos
- Red Bluff East
- Red Bluff West
- Rosewood
- South Battle Creek
- Vina

For nine of the sub-basins the District and TAC have proposed spring and late season groundwater trigger levels based upon selected key wells with a long history of groundwater monitoring and as wells that represent the area. The proposed trigger levels have been developed using a consistent method of data evaluation in each sub-basin. For three sub-basins (Bend, South Battle Creek, and Corning West) insufficient existing or historic groundwater monitoring data are available to propose groundwater trigger levels. For these sub-basins, groundwater monitoring needs have been recommended instead of suggesting trigger levels. The proposed trigger levels and recommended monitoring needs in these Technical Memorandums will be modified according to input from this public review process.

Public Workshops

Once the Background Document and the appropriate Technical Memorandums have been reviewed comments can be directed to District staff, the District Directors, or any of the TAC members. In addition there are five public workshops planned throughout Tehama County to provide an opportunity to assemble public review and comment. The Workshop Schedule is:

1. Corning East and Corning West sub-basins. Thursday, February 19, 2009. Corning City Hall Council Chambers. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
2. Bowman, Rosewood, and South Battle Creek sub-basins. Tuesday, March 3, 2009. Evergreen School Library. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
3. Bend, Antelope, and Dye Creek sub-basins. Wednesday, March 11, 2009. Antelope School Cafeteria. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
4. Los Molinos and Vina sub-basins. Thursday, March 12, 2009. Los Molinos Veterans Hall. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
5. Red Bluff East and West sub-basins. Tuesday, March 24, 2009. Red Bluff Community Center, Westside Room. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.