



## Final Report of the Fond du Lac County Groundwater Quality Advisory Council

August 14, 2008

In April County Executive Allen Buechel commissioned a Groundwater Quality Advisory Council to learn about specific water contamination issues affecting the county and make recommendations to him and to the County Board on specific ways to respond. We have finished our meeting series and are now ready to share with you the recommendations developed by the Council. Below you will find all of the recommendations, with the top three priorities highlighted, and an explanation of how the Council arrived at these decisions.

Over a series of 6 meetings, the volunteer Council heard presentations from local and state experts on the following topics most relevant to Fond du Lac County Groundwater:

- Existing county geological information & areas needing further study
- DNR Delegation Levels, special casing zones, siting of wells
- Municipal Wellhead Protection programs
- Land Spreading (septic, municipal, animal, & industrial waste)
- Manure Storage
- Livestock Siting
- Brown & Calumet Counties Groundwater experiences & responses

At the sixth meeting the group determined the most necessary points to share with the public, in particular the County Board and local government bodies who will be making decisions based on these recommendations.

**Council Priority #1:** Routine and systematic private well sampling throughout the County implementing a database for organizing the data including well location, well construction, well abandonment, and sampling data.

Voluntary well sampling currently happens through the Health Department or through Town-wide sampling events sponsored by UW-Extension. Unfortunately data from these sources is not consolidated in one useable format. Connecting this data with County GIS mapping capabilities would greatly increase our understanding of contamination issues and location of the most sensitive areas in the county. An area of concern and indecision for the Council is whether water sampling should be mandatory or remain voluntary.

The Council supports the July decision of the County Board to enact an ordinance mandating proper well abandonment for wells that are no longer used. Unabandoned or improperly abandoned wells act as conduits threatening groundwater and nearby drinking water wells.

**Council Priority #2:** Establish a Groundwater Specialist Position for Fond du Lac County.\*\*\*

Several county departments (Land & Water Conservation, Health, UW-Extension, Code Enforcement, & Planning) are currently involved in water quality related activities. Centralizing the information and assistance in one department with a staff person designated to coordinate data collection, public education, and other related programming and interface with existing resources would increase both citizens' access to information and response times in urgent water quality situations. Several other WI counties have positions of this nature including neighboring Calumet County.

*\*\*\*Establishment of a Groundwater Specialist position can be seen as a way to enact the other priorities, although each one should be considered independently.*

### **Council Priority #3: Public Education**

Local governments need an informed citizenry to adequately protect & improve groundwater quality. Citizens of Fond du Lac County need routine exposure to information on:

- Importance of groundwater
- Actions that impact groundwater quality
- Well abandonment
- Ways to minimize contamination (proper well maintenance, shared wells, nutrient management plans, etc.)
- Information specific to the county geology/geography
- Information tailored to specific professions which impact water quality

***The following suggestions were also discussed by the Council and deemed important but less urgent than the first three.***

**Nutrient Management:** Farmers and haulers of municipal, septic, industrial, and animal waste need to use proper nutrient management planning and techniques to ensure consistency and appropriateness of application. Local government officials should be notified of who is approved by DNR to spread in their areas.

**County Database:** With the assistance of the WI Geological & Natural History Survey, map groundwater data to determine areas sensitive to water quality concerns.

**Incentives:** Consider ways to encourage proper groundwater practices such as the reporting of unused wells for proper well abandonment and appropriate use of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers.

**Consider Ways To Increase Local Input On Livestock Operations:** Council members hold a range of opinions on the usefulness of state Livestock Siting Statute ACTP 51 regarding water quality and at what level of local government, if any, this statute is most appropriate. Consensus was reached in the idea that increasing local input on livestock operations is desirable, although more discussion is needed to determine how best to achieve this.