Peace River Regional District

Groundwater Baseline Project Community Information
Meeting Notes of May 5, 2015

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Sudeten Hall, 1901 Alaska Highway, Dawson Creek, BC

Presenters/Consultants:
Gilles Wendling, GW Solutions
Reg Whiten, Interraplan
Nancy McHarg, Hoggan and Associates

Staff: Bruce Simard, General Manager of Development Services
Suzanne Garrett, Corporate Services Coordinator

Others: There were 35 members of the public in attendance.

Welcome and Background

Mr. Simard opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. He introduced Dr. Wendling as one of BC's foremost hydrologists. Dr. Wendling and his team have been engaged by the Regional District to conduct a baseline study of groundwater character and quality in the region. The study will provide a picture of the location, movement and quality of groundwater in the region and will indicate points of connection between groundwater and surface water. The study will create a foundation of knowledge that will provide for improved decision making.

A Q & A session took place following Part 1 of the presentation entitled "PRRD Groundwater Baseline (Mid Project Update). Those questions that were not answered will be noted and a response will be made available at a later date.

Q: What is the potential risk of industrial contamination to an individual's drinking water supply?
Q: Are there regulations for industrial drilling, is it logged/recorded, i.e. drill depths, quantity of water used, quality of water?
R: Currently reporting is done on a voluntary basis; however legislation will make reporting mandatory in 2016.
R: The Groundwater Baseline study focused on water wells, not industrial wells. Industry is required to record their usage. The Regional District will be working with other water consultants in support of the requirement that water data from drilling be reported publicly in a standardized format,

Q: Is there a relationship between fracking and water tables?
C: Everyone should have access to industrial drilling information.
C: Industry is the biggest threat to groundwater.
C: This project is focussed on small areas around communities to define potential connectivity, detailed analysis and relationship to other aquifers.
C: Aquifer protection plans – identify/classify risk for future development, i.e. landfill siting.

Q: Is there any historical information on freshets/flooding that may impact an aquifer.
C: Private well information was used in the baseline study.
C: There is a need to include information on the dynamic of surface water.

Q: Are there any natural hydrology regime records?
R: We are putting information together to determine priorities, but do not have much data.

Those in attendance were asked to place a circle on the reference maps to indicate areas where they would like to see more information being made available.

Q: Can anyone monitor the effect of contamination as it moves within the aquifer
R: It is expensive to drill and install monitoring wells; however there is a need for more monitoring

R: Currently there are a dozen monitoring wells in place, six in the Farmington area. Need to determine how we prioritize usage for the public, industry, etc.

Q: What will be the effect of the Site C dam; will it block the recharge area?
R: BC Hydro has a Water Use Plan. The City of Fort St. John has repeatedly asked the same question, not sure if there has been a response, will check.
Q: Does the volume/weight of water affect the aquifer, i.e. Site C?

Coffee break: 8:00 p.m.
Reconvene: 8:10 p.m.

A Q & A took place following Part 2 of the Presentation entitled Water Chemistry "surface water and groundwater chemistry data."

Q: How many elements are being screened for?
R: The Ministry of Health developed guidelines and identified parameters for testing.

Q: Does Fisheries and Oceans have data?
R: Other agency information, i.e. Water Survey of Canada, is integrated into Environmental Management System which is managed in Victoria. Rivers were included a few years ago.

Q: In your professional opinion does the Peace Region have a good supply of groundwater and is it good quality?
R: We have not looked too deeply into this research.
C: Agriculture practices impact water quality.
R: Mitigate and monitor phosphate levels.

Q: What about oil and gas?
R: They use different guidelines and are monitored closely by the Ministry of Environment.
C: Sampling of water wells, please talk to Catherine Henry, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. There is a link on the Regional District's website.

Q: Have you identified threats to the groundwater supply?
R: Will be producing maps; identify threat sources, i.e. agriculture, etc.

Q: During freshets watersheds have no ability to retain water, this impacts retention of water for recharging.
R: Movement of water needs to be monitored to determine trends.
C: Aquifer recharging, loss of wetlands contributes to this as well.
C: Will need to find a balance between groundwater, surface water and aquifers. Water management for all, the community, agriculture, industry, in depth information will assist in informed decision making. Rural OCP identified the need to be sensitive to aquifers, takes time to put together and develop plans. With the right knowledge and right people better decisions are made, your knowledge will assist in developing the program to manage water.
R: Rural/urban – watershed planning, everyone talking shows that it works, research will feed it
Q: Why did the oil and gas industry not provide funding, they should contribute as they will benefit.
C: It was noted that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers provided funding towards the GeoScience project.

Dr. Wendling acknowledged funding partners of the project.
The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.