

Groundwater Protection Strategies and Demonstration, facilitated by Kim Billimoria

Existing Resources/Efforts

The following existing resources and efforts – which might help inform the Groundwater Protection Strategies and Demonstration - were identified during the three listening post sessions:

- Idaho Water Resources (and the WY equivalent) which issues well permits
- Idaho 7th District Health Department (Madison, Teton and Fremont, Idaho) and Teton County, Wyoming equivalent. Has location of permitted septic systems since 1974 (whether all or some combination of community, individual conventional or enhanced systems not totally clear. Need to define exactly what they regulate).
- Existing water distribution and sewage collection systems/rolls (Private systems, community wells, municipal systems)
- Idaho DEQ – community wells and commercial wells
- Local knowledge of problem areas – Eastern Idaho Public Health and contractors/residents.
- Nonprofits working in water arena: Friends of the Teton River (Driggs) and Henry's Fork Foundation (Ashton). FTR currently undergoing drinking source water protection plan in Teton Valley, Idaho with Idaho DEQ.
- Fremont County/Henry's Fork Foundation septic and SWP outreach in 2010 – database exists.
- Teton County FEMA maps of flood plains/paths, plus ISU aerial photos of flooding in Teton County from 2011.
- Fremont County requires permits for all septic systems/wells when sell property (excluding Island Park)
- Fremont County test wells –results are on the Fremont County website.
- Madison County – required Nutrient Pathogen Studies to determine what type of sewer systems and how many per acre. No individual wells allowed in subdivisions in Madison.
- City of Ashton Nitrate Treatment Project
- Teton County, Wyoming pilot wetland/pilot septic projects. Contact: Dan Leemon, Teton Conservation District.
- Lessons learned from Idaho Falls-Ammon water systems issue.
- USDA ground/surface water interaction study complete – Rob Van Kirk. Education and outreach needed. For Teton, Fremont, Madison Counties, Idaho.

Information Gaps

The following information gaps were identified; they may need to be filled in order to conduct the Groundwater Protection element of the grant:

- Groundwater quality and surface water quality – includes run-off and storm water. Confusion over what city/county expects.
- No data on maintenance of on-site sewage disposal systems.

- Water usage – individual well, community/commercial wells, municipal
- Non-permitted on-site septic systems (from prior to 1974)
- What are options/roadblocks to small subdivision central sewer or water systems.
- Individual subdivisions impacts to actual aquifer.
- Differences in requirements between Idaho and Wyoming.
- Well caps to prevent flood contamination – consumer education gap.
- Part time residents knowledge of septic systems (only inhabit their home part time and may have limited knowledge of their systems and how to maintain them). Education gap.
- If well permitting were to include testing then would have way to map nitrates and other contaminates.
- No code to protect groundwater in Teton County, Idaho.
- No mapping/database or widespread knowledge of nitrate and e-coli contamination in Teton County, Idaho.

Critical Areas of Focus

The following critical areas should be incorporated into the design of the Groundwater Protection grant element:

- Septic systems and groundwater contamination. Identification of sources of contamination – domestic, agricultural etc.
- Waterway management (how affects property owners)
- Non-permitted/old septic systems
- Infrastructure for local septic management
- Shallow wells
- Water testing – test wells (four-county inventory).
- Investigation of data available at health departments: permits, performance of existing systems.
- Licensing/certification system (on two-year basis)
- Adequacy of existing regulations as related to what can be tested.
- Regulatory barriers to best septic technology.
- Mapping for nitrate contamination – and informing public
- Floodplain development
- DEQ (regulation and oversight) relationship to cities and counties.

Interested Publics/Underserved Populations and How to Reach Them

Publics that should be invited to participate as this grant element proceeds include the following, along with suggestions of how to reach out to them:

- Elected officials and Planning and Zoning Commissions. Inform them of information related to info gaps, ask them for resources and other areas of focus.
- Local knowledge from private sector - septic and well contractors (find names in local newspapers, phone books)

- Homeowners – mailings, local newspapers
- State Health Departments for information and collaboration. Eastern Idaho Public Health, Department of Environmental Quality etc.
- Permitting agencies, building inspectors etc. are gatekeepers for proper permits for wells, and septic systems.
- Friends of the Teton River constituents – in position to do outreach in Teton River Watershed.
- Henry's Fork Foundation constituents.
- All counties and cities in study area – their operations staff.
- Forest Service
- Septic systems users – education through public service announcements