



State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS

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Dear Water User:

On November 15, 1995, three public meetings were held in Heber, Orem and Nephi to announce a new ground water policy for the Utah Lake drainage basin. At those meetings we outlined the basic points of the new policy, answered questions and set a 30-day comment period. That period has ended, and this letter will respond to the comments. Six comments letters were received. Five of the six expressed support for the new policy, but the monitoring requirement was criticized by four. Three thought the 100 acre-foot or greater metering requirement should be lowered to include more wells, and the other objected to the metering requirement as being too costly. The remaining comment questioned the estimates of the amount of water being pumped in Cedar Valley.

First, we would like to address the matter of the 100 acre-foot criteria for requiring metering. A critical part of the management plan is the limits it places on ground water withdrawals in northern and southern Utah Valley and Goshen Valley. To make these withdrawal limits enforceable, data is required on well pumpage. As we developed the plan, we realized it would not be feasible to require meters on all the estimated 8,000 wells in the basin. With a limit of 100 acre-feet per year, 76% percent of pumpage was accounted for and included an estimated 175 wells. This limit was set as being representative without being excessive. After setting the limit, staff examined the number of water users who would be affected. Indications show that about 75% of the affected water users are already metering and reporting their annual withdrawals.

Regarding the cost of metering, we generally think of a mechanical, in-line, propeller type, totalizing meter. Many water users are not fond of these because of costs and maintenance requirements. We will be flexible as to the way metering is accomplished, and will consider other metering methods as long as it can be done accurately.

One water user suggested the annual ground water withdrawal figures for Cedar Valley were too low. The available data indicates that the average annual withdrawal for the period 1985 to 1994 was about 2,500 acre-feet. The state of Utah has a cooperative program with the USGS to determine annual withdrawals throughout the state. To determine the withdrawal from wells that are not metered, the general practice is to take several measurements of instantaneous discharge at various times throughout the year. At the end of the year or irrigation season, the total number of hours the well was pumped is multiplied by the average discharge. For example, if the average discharge was measured to be 1.25 cfs and the well was pumped for 3,100 hours during the year, the annual withdrawal is calculated at 320 acre-feet.



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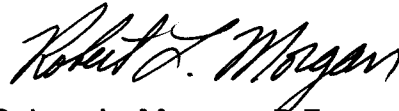
Over the past several years, studies of ground water resources have been completed in most of the basin. All these studies indicate a close relationship between surface water streams and ground water aquifers. Utah water law is based upon the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation and, as the State Engineer, it is my responsibility to administer and manage the water resources in a way that promotes maximum beneficial use while protecting prior water rights. In my opinion, the current data suggests we must manage the surface and ground water resources in a coordinated manner. The proposal set forth at the November 15 public meetings is an attempt to implement this water management strategy in the basin.

As people come into our office to file a new appropriation or become aware of the ground water management plan, they have not accepted it with open arms. In fact, it has been quite the contrary. The tone of the conversations has been that the State Engineer cannot change the law without giving proper public notice. It should be noted that no laws have been changed, and all rights that everyone enjoys in this state are still intact. The only thing that has significantly changed in this management plan is that no new appropriation of ground water will be considered.

Over 100 people attended the three public meetings; only six written comments, and five of them supporting the proposed change, were received. We appreciate the individuals who submitted comments; however, I am disappointed we did not receive more feedback. The proposed plan will affect the future water use practices in the basin. With the lack of input, I assume the proposal was acceptable to the majority of people.

We appreciate your involvement in this important matter and will keep you apprised of future developments. I hope this letter serves to answer your concerns about the ground water management plan. Should you have questions, please contact our office.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Morgan, P.E.
State Engineer

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