

## **National Ground Water Monitoring Network Pilot Project Fact Sheet**

February 5, 2010

Five pilot projects have been chosen to test the concept of a National Ground Water Monitoring Network (NGWMN). Currently there is no system that can provide a nationwide assessment and evaluation of the conditions, availability, or water-quality trends of the country's groundwater resources.

"It's like having a bank account and not knowing how much money you have and whether you are losing or gaining money over time," says Robert Schreiber PE, co-chair of the Subcommittee on Ground Water (SOGW) which developed the conceptual NGWMN. "But instead of money, you have groundwater, which supplies 78% of community water systems, provides water for nearly all of rural America, and accounts for 42% of the nation's irrigation water," adds Schreiber, a consultant with CDM.

"Water has increasing importance in local, regional, and national policy decisions," says Matthew C. Larsen, U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Associate Director for Water. "With population growth, shifts in development, land use, irrigation, and growing concern with the effects of climate change on water resources, it's essential for scientists, resource managers, and policymakers to have access to sound information as a basis for decision on ways to meet human and ecosystem water needs."

Federal, regional, state and local governments monitor groundwater resources but the data are neither easily compiled nor readily accessible across political boundaries. Data are also not gathered in some areas. That's where the pilots come into play. "Watershed-based decision-making is a complex and challenging process. Significant demands exist on our nation's water resources. State groundwater monitoring pilot projects are an excellent first step in understanding the efficacy of assembling a national groundwater data set to support watershed decisions on a more comprehensive basis," notes Mike Shapiro, U.S. EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water and EPA's Representative on the federal Advisory Committee on Water Information, supporting the SOGW pilot projects.

The USGS, U.S. EPA, and pilot partners from the states of Illinois-Indiana, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, and Texas will collaborate to assess currently available data, review methods of data collection and storage, pinpoint data gaps, and test data-sharing feasibility. “Montana has more than 900 routinely monitored wells and the potential to easily share our data with others to improve national-scale assessments is exciting,” says Thomas Patton with the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology and Montana’s pilot project leader. “Additionally, by working together, federal support may eventually become available to assist state-operated networks with some of their costs to provide data consistent with national interests,” said Patton.

The pilot phase kicked off January 28, 2010 and the final pilot report is anticipated to be completed in March 2011. While many states submitted quality applications to be NGWMN pilots, existing resources allowed the SOGW to select only five partners. The pilot phase will provide valuable lessons learned, so, if funding becomes available in the future, the project can grow into a truly nationwide network

“The Ground Water Protection Council appreciates the opportunity to help design and participate in initiating the pilot phase through several of our State members,” says Mike Paque, GWPC executive director. “Our states all realize that groundwater is one of their most valuable resources and is critical to meeting future water supply needs.”

John Jansen, National Ground Water Association’s subcommittee representative, captures the essence of the pilot projects: “This is the next logical step toward responsible stewardship of the nation's water resources and the ecology and economy that depend on them.”

For more information regarding the pilot project or concepts for a NGWMN visit the Subcommittee on Ground Water’s Web site at [www.acwi.gov/sogw](http://www.acwi.gov/sogw)

*The Subcommittee on Ground Water was established by the Federal Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI) to develop a framework that establishes and encourages implementation of a long-term national ground-water level and quality monitoring network. The SOGW, which together with its working groups, includes more than 70 people representing the private sector and 54 different organizations, including nongovernmental organizations, State and local agencies, Federal agencies, and academia*