

AGAI Ripple

Association of Gallatin
Agricultural Irrigators

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Summer Update

AGAI hosted it's first Spring Water Dinner

The first ever Spring Water Dinner was held on May 3rd at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds. The event was a joint effort by AGAI and the District Court in order to coordinate their meetings. A big thank you goes out to Lyman Fellows for the great food and Travis Swanson, Sean McKay, and Nathan Kamerman for providing the entertainment while we ate. We would also like to thank Dairy Gold for the donation of the ice cream. Walt Sales introduced our new West Gallatin Water Commissioner, George Alberda. John Semple, AGAI's lobbyist, gave a report on the 59th Legislative Assembly and work that was done. Judge Holly Brown, Judge Bruce Loble and Roy Kaiser gave reports and updates as well. Thanks to the District Court for bringing interested water users, citizens, and key players together to discuss water issues of current interest.

AGAI Directors met with Director of DNRC

AGAI directors Walt Sales and Mick Seeburg traveled to Helena on May 25th to attend a meeting facilitated by Mary Sexton, the new Director of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Walt and Mick agreed to serve on two committees organized by DNRC, with one committee formed to discuss ground water/surface water interaction issues and the other committee formed to discuss water banking. Thanks to Walt and Mick for putting in the miles!

AGAI Director appointed to Board of Greater Gallatin Watershed Council

Patrick Underwood has officially take over for Mick Seeburg as a Director on the Board of the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council. Working with local subwatershed groups and organizations, the Council's action areas include education, research, technical assistance and administrative support.

AGAI's Legal Affairs Committee Report

AGAI's legal affairs committee has remained active since the adjournment of the legislature. The bill sponsored by AGAI passed the Senate only to fail in the House natural resource committee on a tie vote. Subsequently, AGAI has been involved with the DNRC's select task force on integrated surface/ground water management and will attend the third meeting of the group at the end of August. AGAI is attempting to change the law to reduce the need to expend time and money on objections to new uses in the legislatively closed upper Missouri River basin.

An application for a ninth supply well at the Four Corners development site has prompted AGAI to test it's legal standing by filing objection to the proposed new well, which at the time of the objection deadline included a request to appropriate new surface water (specifically what the basin closure is about) to augment the consumptive water use of the ninth well. AGAI did not believe a new ground water use could be adequately remediated by a new surface use which is supposedly legally foreclosed by the Upper Missouri Basin Closure. AGAI has joined the West Gallatin Canal in objection to US Solutions' proposed eight wells which DNRC's hydrologist has identified to have a downstream impact on surface right holders. There are other development and water use situations that AGAI is closely monitoring here in our valley with an eye towards protecting the surface flows of the Gallatin and it's tributaries while being ever mindful of the limited financial resources available to protect what is already supposed to be ours. Please stay tuned; there will be more activity in this area of AGAI opera-

Weed of the Month: Whitetop

- A single plant can spread to an area 12 feet in diameter in its first year of growth.
- Contains glucosinolates—which can be toxic to cattle!
- Long lived, rhizomatous perennials—pulling whitetop doesn't work!
- Lateral roots eventually turn down to become vertical roots, and in some cases roots extend into the water table.
- Deep root systems and its ability to reproduce vegetatively make this a Noxious Weed!

For more information, contact the **Gallatin County Weed Control District** at **582-3562**.

AGAI's Mission

The mission of the Association is to be the guardian and advocate of the Gallatin River system and its historically decreed water rights.

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Reminder:

AGAI's Annual Membership Meeting will be held on November 16, 2005.



West Gallatin River Commissioner Report

I was asked to give a short report on how my new job as West Gallatin River Water Commissioner was going. It seems to me that everything is going well. I was put on the job on the 14th of July and the next day the water was cut up to 1890. That lasted a few days and then on the 18th of July the 1890 water was cut off. The river then held up until July 30, when a cut was made up to the 1886 water. As I write this, that is where we are at now. In looking back at last year's record of the river flow, on any given day we are about 3500 to 4000 miners inches above last year. That puts the cuts approximately a week later than last year.

Before we were blessed with the rains this spring I don't think anyone expected to be better off than last year. I thought I was going to begin my new job a lot sooner than I actually did. I have enjoyed doing it; the irrigators on the West Gallatin are a good group of people to work with. I thank you guys for helping me along through this learning curve. I just got off the phone with the Belgrade newspaper. That is the one aspect of this job I don't like: talking to the newspapers, television, etc. I'm finding out there are a lot of things they didn't tell me about this job. I'm going to have a talk with Dave Pruitt. But I'll hang in there if you will put up with me. Thanks again and call me anytime, my number is 580-5555.

George Alberda

Streamside

Gravity is the driving force behind rivers, causing water to downhill, to seep into streams when the water table lies above the streambed, and to seep into the ground.

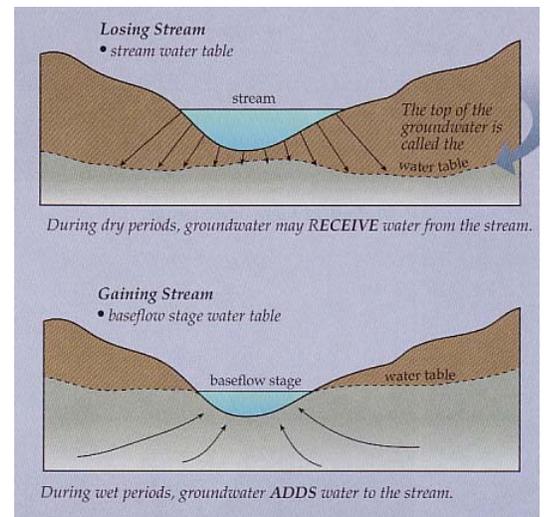
Groundwater is the water that seeps through the spaces between soil particles and flows into aquifers.

Aquifers are saturated zones of sand, gravel, or fractured bedrock underlying the valley.

Porosity is the volume of the spaces or pores between particles in an aquifer. It varies with the type of material present and determines how much water the aquifer can hold.

Permeability is the rate of water movement through the soil or aquifer. It is much faster in materials with large pores, such as gravels and sand, than in materials with small pores, such as clays.

Text & photos from Montana Stream Management Guide for Landowners, Managers and Stream Users



Water Across the West

Idaho recognizes interconnectivity of water system

Beginning in the 1950's, farmers drilled thousands of wells tapping into the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. The wells, which resulted in more than a million acres under irrigation, caused a decline in the flows of springs, streams and rivers. The water shortages have divided farmers into two camps—the surfaces-water users and the groundwater pumpers. When legal wrangling began, the Legislature began to take notice. To address the issue, over \$60 million was appropriated to launch the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement, that is expected to be matched with \$180 million of federal money, paying farmers to idle fields and hence reduce the demand for water.

The real solution to water shortages lies in the maturity of Idaho's water management. In the mid-1990's, the Idaho Department of Water Resources recognized the connection between groundwater pumping and surface water declines. The IDWR instituted "conjunctive" management, which treats both surface and ground water as a single, interconnected water system. The decisions regarding water management are increasingly based on science. University of Idaho researchers and hydrologists have spend eight years developing a computer model of how water moves through the aquifer. The resulting reforms have helped the state weather the record 5 year drought. Idaho's water management is not perfect, but recent progress confirms that they are heading in the right direction.

Summary of an article entitled "Idaho gets smart about water" from High Country News June 2005

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