



Evening News - Groundwater mapping

With groundwater playing an increasingly important role in the Okanagan's future, it's important to find out where it's plentiful.

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Groundbreaking project

CHBC News, Barry McDivitt : Friday, February 03, 2012 7:39 PM

Thousands of Okanagan families and farms get their water from wells, but nobody knows for certain how much groundwater the valley has.

That is why the Okanagan Basin Water Board is drilling 15 monitoring wells from Osoyoos to Spallumcheen.

The OBWB held a groundbreaking ceremony at a well in Joe Rich east of Kelowna Friday morning.

"We know very little about our groundwater," said Anna Warwick Spears, executive director of the OBWB. "That's a big problem for us. How can you plan for new neighbourhoods if you don't know how large the resource is?"

Aquifers can dry up if too much water is taken out of them, so the OBWB wants to be able to monitor them.

In Joe Rich, workers had to drill through about 130 meters of bedrock before they hit a steady supply of water.

The well will only provide about a gallon and a half of water a minute, which is barely enough for a single household.

Longtime Joe Rich resident Patty Hanson says some of her neighbours have to make do with less than a third of a gallon a minute.

"You have to be really careful with water," said Hanson. "You don't put the washing machine and the dishwasher on at the same time."

The new monitoring wells will permit the Water Board to get a better idea of just how much groundwater the Okanagan has and how it should be managed.

The wells cost an average of \$25,000 each.

The money is coming from Okanagan Regional Districts, the province, and Ottawa.

All of the wells should be in operating by the end of 2013.

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