

Groundwater monitoring well planned

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Summerland will get a groundwater monitoring well as part of an Okanagan Basin Water Board project.

One such well is being drilled this month in the Joe Rich area near Kelowna.

The project is part of the OBWB's Groundwater Monitoring Project, drilling wells in a number of Okanagan aquifers that have been identified as vulnerable and in need of monitoring because of limited water supply and increasing demand. The wells are being drilled in partnership with B.C. Ministry of Environment, B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada and various Okanagan local governments.

"Groundwater is one of the biggest unknowns in this valley," said Dr. Anna Warwick Sears, executive director for the OBWB.

"Groundwater is an important supply of water to many residents in this valley, but because its extraction is currently unlicensed in B.C., we don't have an accurate measure of how much is being drawn out," she said. At the same time, recent research indicates there are a number of sensitive aquifers in the valley.

The Joe Rich monitoring well is being drilled in one of 15 Okanagan aquifers identified as sensitive. A number of monitoring wells have already been drilled with two on Anarchist Mountain outside of Osoyoos, two in Oliver, two in Twin Lakes near Keremeos, and one in Spallumcheen. Others are proposed in Summerland, Ellison, West Kelowna, Penticton and in an aquifer on UBC Okanagan lands.

These monitoring wells will help communities protect, manage and sustain their groundwater supplies and help them in land-use planning decisions that could affect these aquifers.

"The water of this valley is all connected," noted Warwick Sears, "from the water that flows down our mountains into the creeks, rivers and lakes in the valley bottom, to the water in our

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underground aquifers that also ends up in our lakes. Monitoring these important water sources is good for Joe Rich and the other communities that have them installed, but also good for the entire valley. Knowing where and how much water we have will help ensure a sustainable supply.”