



## CITY OF BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 20, 2009

Contact: Jalyn Cummings  
Water Resources Manager  
City of Bainbridge Island  
(206)780-3752  
jcummings@ci.bainbridge-isl.wa.us

### **Bainbridge Island Water Resources Q & A**

Bainbridge Island, WA, February 20, 2009 –Recent Kitsap Sun articles reported that Bainbridge Island’s water supply is seeing “steep drops” due to declining water levels and is “imperiled” by the threat of saltwater intrusion. In fact, the Groundwater Monitoring Program Update – December 2008 reflects that the island’s aquifers are relatively stable, according to city water resources manager Jalyn Cummings.

“It’s important to remember that we’re dealing with a complex aquifer system,” Cummings said. “The data mentioned in the Sun article is just a thin slice of a much larger study. We need to consider this information in the full context of available data in order to learn from it. We also need to remember that this report is a periodic update that does not offer conclusive findings about the Island’s water resources and one well showing a decline does not mean the entire aquifer is declining.”

The Groundwater Monitoring Program Update has been updated by the consultant which prepared it, Aspect Consulting, and will be re-released in the near future. It will be available on the city’s web site.

Cummings offers the following answers to citizen queries and concerns sparked by the recent article.

#### **Q. Is the island’s water supply in danger?**

Nothing in the city’s data set indicates that the island’s water supply is in danger. The December, 2008 Groundwater Monitoring Program Update found only one of the 103 wells the City monitors each month showed a decrease in water level during the past two years. While the decrease in water level in this well is small in comparison with its total depth, and may not be indicative of levels in the entire aquifer, the report’s authors recommended following the monitoring program’s plan which calls for further monitoring and investigation. It is important to understand that the update is a report on monitoring data and does not offer any conclusive findings or recommendations.

#### **Q. Should we be monitoring the island’s groundwater?**

Yes, and we are doing so. Because groundwater is the island’s sole source of drinking water, it is a primary goal of the city to study, understand and protect this resource. To achieve this goal, the city began an intensive groundwater modeling study in 2006, building on previous monitoring efforts. Monthly monitoring of over 100 island wells, continuing over two years,

will provide baseline data for a complex computer model of the island's aquifers. The groundwater model, which is being developed in coordination with the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), will allow city staff and policy makers to evaluate water resources and anticipate the impacts of potential environmental changes. "The monitoring network is improving our understanding of the island's aquifers, and will increase our ability to be good stewards of our groundwater resources," said Martin Sebran, hydrogeologist with the Kitsap Public Utilities District, which manages water on the north end of the island.

**Q. Are island wells being impacted by saltwater intrusion?**

No indication of saltwater intrusion was found in 2008 by the U.S. Geological Survey, which sampled approximately 30 wells around the island for chloride, an indicator of intrusion. The wells chosen for testing were considered representative of those most vulnerable to intrusion because they have intakes below sea level and are near the shoreline.

In 2006, the city's monitoring program found one well in the Seabold area which showed evidence of saltwater intrusion. The well has since been replaced and, according to the manager, the new well exhibits good water quality and no chloride. Chloride levels measured in monitoring activities of all other aquifers were low, indicating normal background levels for Bainbridge Island, rather than saltwater intrusion. This does not rule out the possibility of saltwater intrusion somewhere on the island, but the data collected by the city thus far shows no other evidence of saltwater intrusion.

**Q. What is next for the island's water monitoring program?**

The city's groundwater database is periodically updated with data on water levels, chloride concentrations, production volumes and rainfall data. Collection of this baseline data is to be used in the USGS groundwater model, scheduled for completion in April, 2010. Upon completion of the model, the city will continue its groundwater monitoring network on a smaller scale. The groundwater model will reside at the city and data will continue to be collected in order to update the model and run future groundwater scenarios.

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