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Public invited to Chippewa County groundwater study open house
Researchers to provide progress report

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The Chippewa County Dept. of Land Conservation and Forest Management will host an informational meeting with the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (WGNHS) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on March 17, 2015 to provide an update on the five-year study being conducted to evaluate the impact of industrial sand mining and irrigated agriculture on water resources in western Chippewa County.

The study began in the fall of 2012 in response to citizen concerns about the possible cumulative impacts of new sand mines and irrigation on local groundwater and stream levels.

Now in year three of the study, the researchers will discuss progress that has been made in developing the groundwater flow model and estimating recharge under current and future land use scenarios.

“We’ve had a successful year and are ready to update all stakeholders about the development of the groundwater model for western Chippewa County,” says Mike Parsen, hydrogeologist with the WGNHS. “Once completed, the groundwater model will be of direct value to the public, mine operators, farmers, and local units of government in helping manage their water resources.”

The event will be held at the Bloomer Middle School in the City of Bloomer, Wis. Informational displays will be open from 5 to 7 p.m. WGNHS and USGS research scientists will give a formal presentation from 7 to 9 p.m. with opportunities for questions. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Project partners include Chippewa County and a diverse group of stakeholders, including several industrial sand mining companies, the Wisconsin Farmers Union, Trout Unlimited, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and local citizen representatives.

The goals of the project are to:

--Collect hydrogeologic data to characterize the existing groundwater flow system.

--Build a pair of soil-water and groundwater flow models to evaluate the impacts of current and future water use on the hydrologic system.

--Use the soil-water and groundwater model results to explain how groundwater aquifers and connected streams are expected to respond to stress such as changes in landscape topography and increased pumping rates.

--Provide results to project stakeholders and the public on a regular basis through informational presentations and a final report.

For a copy of the study proposal go to www.co.chippewa.wi.us/lcfm and click on the link “Chippewa County Groundwater Study.”

For additional information, contact Mike Parsen, hydrogeologist with the WGNHS at michael.parsen@wgnhs.uwex.edu, (608) 262-9419, or Paul Juckem, hydrologist with the USGS at pfjuckem@usgs.gov, (608) 821-3845.