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*******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*******

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State Engineer Orders Corrective Controls in the Laramie County Control Area

CHEYENNE, Wyo. - Responding to mounting concerns over increasing development and use of groundwater resources in the Laramie County Control Area (LCCA), State Engineer Pat Tyrrell issued an order today that will guide groundwater development in that area for at least the next five years.

The Order replaces the State Engineer's April 11, 2012 Temporary Order which established well spacing restrictions (horizontally and vertically) as well as use limitations for most new groundwater applications within the LCCA. The Temporary Order was initially scheduled to remain in effect until October 1, 2013, but was ultimately extended until April 1, 2015.

Following issuance of the Temporary Order, the State Engineer's Office (SEO) embarked on a hydrogeologic study, the results of which were intended to, among other things, inform future groundwater management decisions whether through controls adopted by the State Engineer or by voluntary agreement as allowed by statute. The study (the AMEC Report) was completed in March, 2014 and presented at a public meeting on March 27, 2014.

On April 10, 2014, a public hearing was held before the State Engineer and the Laramie County Control Area Advisory Board pursuant to Wyoming Statute § 41-3-915. On April 24, 2014, the Laramie County Control Area Advisory Board advised the State Engineer that the underground water in the Control Area is not adequate for the needs of all appropriators.

The LCCA generally encompasses the eastern two-thirds of Laramie County. Since its creation on September 2, 1981, groundwater levels in the eastern part of the LCCA have continued to decline as measured by the SEO's groundwater monitoring network. Almost all groundwater production within the LCCA is from the High Plains Aquifer. Water demand for irrigation dominates all other withdrawals in the LCCA, averaging 92 percent of total groundwater withdrawals during the irrigation season. Three distinct areas of continued significant groundwater level declines occur in the vicinities of Pine Bluffs, Carpenter, and Albin.

The Order identifies four distinct areas within the LCCA characterized by varying hydrogeologic conditions and levels of development. The areas are entitled the "Drawdown Area," the "Conservation Area," the "Unaffected Area," and "Underlying Units." A map is provided with the Order delineating all but the "Underlying Units." In all but the "Unaffected Area," which is largely north of Horse Creek, the Order sets forth well spacing requirements for all new wells. The Order requires meters for all wells in the LCCA, except those for small stock and domestic uses, and metered amounts must be reported to the State Engineer's Office annually. Meters are required to be installed prior to use in water year 2017. The "Drawdown Area" around Carpenter, Pine Bluffs, and Albin is closed to further permitting of large capacity wells in the High Plains Aquifer. In the "Conservation Area," which is much of the central and western parts of the LCCA, new larger wells can be permitted if spacing requirements are met, but owners must measure and report water levels, limit drawdowns to 20 percent of available water in their

well, and in some cases install dedicated monitoring wells. Except for time-limited wells, or wells serving small stock and domestic uses, the Order requires adjudication of all unadjudicated wells by the end of November, 2017. The Order also allows wells to be completed in the deeper “Underlying Units,” which also have metering and spacing requirements, and will be similarly limited to a maximum drawdowns at the well or at a nearby monitoring well if required as a permit condition.

The Order is in effect for a period of at least five years. Beginning November 16, 2019, the State Engineer will review the effects of the first three years of the Order’s operation. At that time, the current Order will either remain in effect or be terminated, or a new Order will be issued. At any time, the Order may also be modified, or replaced by a voluntary agreement developed by groundwater appropriators in the LCCA, if approved by the State Engineer.

The Order will be posted on the State Engineer’s website on Wednesday, April 1, 2015.

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Patrick. T. Tyrrell
State Engineer