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### **State Engineer Orders Temporary Spacing Regs in LCCA**

CHEYENNE, Wyo. - Responding to mounting concerns over increasing development and use of groundwater resources in southeast Wyoming, State Engineer Pat Tyrrell issued an order Wednesday that will temporarily limit groundwater development for 18 months while the area's groundwater resource and use are re-appraised.

More specifically, the order was issued for the Laramie County Control Area which encompasses approximately the eastern two-thirds of Laramie County, Wyoming. In crafting the order, Tyrrell took into account concerns voiced by Laramie County Control Area Advisory Board members.

In the order, Tyrrell calls for wells that are drilled for domestic and stock watering uses to be spaced such that no more than one well is drilled per lawfully subdivided lot or, in the case of other legal parcels of land, no more than one well per 10 acres will be allowed, if the target water source is the High Plains aquifer system. Additionally, such wells will be limited in allowable annual use to 1 acre-foot.

Miscellaneous use wells drilled in the High Plains aquifer system that will produce 25 gpm or less will be required to be a minimum of 1-mile apart and will be limited to a maximum annual use of 2 acre-feet.

Miscellaneous use wells producing greater than 25 gpm, as well as irrigation, industrial, and municipal use wells will be required to be drilled into the deeper Lance Formation or the Fox Hills Sandstone, and can be spaced no closer than one mile from an existing well in the same groundwater source. Wells drilled in the Lance Formation or the Fox Hills Sandstone for domestic and stock watering use will not be restricted to any minimum spacing requirements.

The Laramie County Control Area, established in its present configuration by the Wyoming State Board of Control in 1981, was formed at the request of resident landowners amid concerns that declining water levels could threaten drinking and stock water supplies and negatively affect irrigated agriculture.

The State Engineer has approved very few large producing wells ensued as is evidenced by the issuance of only 15 new irrigation well permits in the Control Area since its formation. Approval of enlargement permits for existing wells has been much more common.

Since 1981, the Wyoming State Engineer's Office has developed and maintains 33 water-level monitoring wells in Laramie County, of which 31 are located in the Control Area, in an effort to keep watch on the resource. Together, those monitoring wells continue to indicate declining water levels. The rate of decline is more severe in some parts of the Control Area than others.

The Control Area still sees growing water demands from subdivision development, irrigation and municipal uses, added to which is the current need for water for drilling wells in the Niobrara Shale oil play.

According to Tyrrell, "eighteen months should allow for the development of strategies upon which the residents of the (Laramie County) Control Area can rely to preserve and/or extend the (ground) water resources of the area, while still allowing sufficient water for the oil play from existing sources through temporary use agreements."

A public meeting will be held on May 3, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in Room B63 of the Herschler Building, 122 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Cheyenne, WY to give the State Engineer's Office an opportunity to present the temporary plan to the public and allow for residents to ask questions.