
State Water Resources Control Board

August 14, 2015

Name
Organization
Address
City, CA Zip Code

DISCLOSURE OF WATER SUPPLY WELL LOCATION INFORMATION ON GEOTRACKER

Greetings:

Recently, state law (Water Code section 13752) was amended to mandate public access to well completion reports. Well completion reports are required to be filed with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) for all groundwater wells at the time that they are constructed. The reports are required to contain information regarding each well's location and construction, and the lithology of the subsurface, among other items. Prior to the statutory amendment, well completion reports were confidential and not available to the public. As a result of the amendment, all well completion reports are available to the public, except that personal information (the owner's name and address) must be removed (redacted). The purpose of this letter is to solicit your input (and input from your membership, if applicable) on what steps, if any, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) should take in response to this new law.

Currently, the State Water Board obscures from public view the precise locations of certain types of, but not all, groundwater wells on its GeoTracker and GeoTracker Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) online groundwater information systems (<http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/> and <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/gama>). Specifically, GeoTracker GAMA has historically shown the precise locations of site cleanup monitoring wells, but has obscured the locations of water supply wells for public water systems and private domestic wells by providing a randomly-generated point within approximately one mile of the well's precise location. In addition, the State Water Board's Drinking Water Program has not released records that identify the precise location of water supply wells used by public water systems. In accordance with the previous version of Water Code section 13752 and the Public Records Act, the State Water Board has been granting access to the precise locations of water supply wells only to public agencies that agree not to disclose those locations. Since well completion reports, including information about the location of the wells, are now publicly

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available by request from DWR,¹ State Water Board management is considering whether to continue maintaining the confidentiality of groundwater well location information on its online groundwater information systems.

Access to accurate, complete, and centrally located groundwater data is critical to better manage our water resources, especially in time of drought and as local agencies throughout the state implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Obscuring water supply well location information has reduced the ability of hydrogeologic researchers, decision-makers and the public, including disadvantaged communities, to readily access accurate data. Dozens of large water systems currently provide water supply well information on the internet and water supply wells are often identifiable via online mapping tools, such as Google maps.

Most water supply wells are also visible to any person observing the site, because a portion of the well or its related structures is above the ground surface. The State Water Board's water right database, (eWRIMS) has for several years publicly shown the precise location of all water right diversion points, including wells that divert water subject to the State Water Board's water right permitting authority. Displaying the exact location of water supply well locations in GeoTracker would align how the State Water Board displays water supply location data across its databases. Nonetheless, some have expressed water security concerns if water supply well locations are more readily available on GeoTracker.

We welcome your comments on making well information public on the State Water Board's databases.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments must be received by **5:00 p.m. Monday, September 14, 2015 (30 days)** and sent electronically to Laura.Shook@waterboards.ca.gov. Please indicate on the transmittal subject line: **"Comment Letter – Disclosure of Water Supply Well Location Information."** If you do not have internet access, please submit your written comments to:

Ms. Laura Shook
Division of Water Quality
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 15th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

We plan to summarize the results of your input and to solicit public comment at a future meeting of the State Water Board. Please check the State Water Board web site for future meeting announcements for this item: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>. In order to receive updates regarding this item, please sign up on the GAMA Lyris email list http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.shtml.

¹ DWR is the lead agency in distributing well completion reports to the public. DWR is in the process of redacting names and addresses from approximately 800,000 well completion reports, and expects to make all well completion reports available to the public online in approximately a year. In the meantime, members of the public may request specific well completion reports directly from DWR. More information on DWR's activities related to the statutory amendment is available at http://water.ca.gov/groundwater/wells/well_completion_reports.cfm.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions about this letter, please contact Ms. Laura Shook by telephone at (916) 341-5271 or by email (Laura.Shook@waterboards.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Berg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "B".

Enclosure

cc: see next pages

cc:

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California Cotton Ginners Association
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California Groundwater Association
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California Manufacturing Association
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California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
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California Special Districts Association
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California Water Association
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