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## Feds step in to help state groundwater-testing program

*USGS scientists to discuss well-sampling at meeting Tuesday in Ukiah, CA*

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientists will discuss an investigation they are conducting of groundwater quality in the Northern Coast Region of California at an informational session Tuesday, May 26, in Ukiah, CA. A second informational session, also open to the public, is set for July 15 in Eureka, CA.

The U.S. Geological Survey's National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) program is funding the study to continue the work of the State of California's Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) program, which has been halted due to a lack of funding. NAWQA is providing about \$500,000 to fund the testing and scientific analysis.

Starting in June and continuing through the summer, USGS scientists will sample groundwater from about 60 wells in valleys in the Coast Range north of San Francisco Bay, including areas around Clear Lake, Ukiah, Willits and Covelo, and in coastal areas from Point Arena to Crescent City. The testing will be done in portions of nine counties – Napa, Sonoma, Colusa, Glenn, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte, Trinity, and Lake.

Scientists will analyze these samples for a large number of naturally-occurring and human-made compounds. The data from this study will help water agencies better manage and protect groundwater supplies.

The first information session is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, May 26, at the Mendocino County Water Agency, 890 North Bush St., Ukiah, CA, 95482. A second meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Wednesday, July 15, at the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, 828 Seventh St., Eureka, CA, 95502.

A program of the State Water Resources Control Board, GAMA (<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/>) has sought to improve comprehensive statewide groundwater monitoring and to increase the availability of groundwater-quality information to the public. For the last four years, the USGS has been the lead for GAMA's Priority Basin Project, which monitors and assesses water quality in groundwater basins that are important sources of public water supply.

With the California budget crisis and a freeze on spending state bond money, the GAMA Priority Basin Project was shut down in December 2008 after the USGS tested nearly 2,000 wells in 99 groundwater basins throughout the state. Another 25 basins have yet to be sampled – including those in the North Coast Region.

The USGS National Water Quality Assessment (<http://ca.water.usgs.gov/nawqa.html>) stepped in to help complete at least some of that work. A nationwide program, NAWQA tracks the status and trends in the

quality of freshwater streams and aquifers to provide a sound understanding of the natural and human factors that affect the quality of these resources.

The North Coast Region study fits into a regional assessment NAWQA is doing of coastal groundwater basins throughout California (<http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2005/3013/>).

It is not known if NAWQA will be able to fund additional study units, said Dr. Kenneth Belitz, chief scientist for USGS' GAMA program.

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