

Immediate release: Monday 24th August 2009

Modelling is not just for fashion: Howard East residents will have a model of their groundwater system

A 3D visualisation model to help Howard East residents “see” underground water systems and the relationships between rainfall, recharge and groundwater levels in the Howard East aquifer has been developed by a TRaCK, Queensland University of Technology and CSIRO research team.

The visualisation model will be demonstrated to the Howard Springs public at a meeting at **Girraween Primary School at 6:30 pm on Wednesday September 9th 2009**. The model will soon be available to the public on CD.

CSIRO researcher, Sharna Nolan, said the computer model will help people living in the area to better understand the region’s water systems and answer questions such as:

- What is the internal geological structure of the area?
- Where is groundwater likely to occur in the area and how does the Howard East aquifer system work?
- How does the aquifer respond to rainfall?
- Are shallower, older bores likely to run dry?
- What effect does the current extraction have on local groundwater levels?
- How many bores are there and what aquifer do they draw from?
- Is monitoring of water levels worthwhile?

Ms Nolan said being able to “see” the groundwater system and how it operates will help residents not only understand their own bore, but also water systems in the broader region.

“The 3D model will help people make sense of many factors impacting on the Howard East groundwater system, and will support their decisions about water resource allocation and system management,” she said

Ms Nolan said the model is important considering the recent growth in residential and horticultural holdings in the Howard Springs region, and the forecast in demand from Darwin City.

“The community recognises a need for a local water strategy to be developed to protect the local environment, but are unsure how the system works or how to make decisions about water allocation. By demonstrating the system structure and what groundwater levels are doing over time, we hope to build understanding of the aquifers and encourage the community to get involved in water planning,” she said.

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The project team's goal was to build a model to help policy makers and the community to make decisions about current water use and to encourage thought and discussion about how much water might be needed to allocate to different uses.

The model is based on data in government records, and also incorporates information from local council members, Howard Springs residents, growers and stakeholder groups. It has also drawn on the expertise and feedback from local bore drillers, government agency staff and other groundwater experts.

At the community meeting Sharna Nolan from CSIRO Darwin and Amy Hawke and Dr Malcolm Cox, from the Queensland University of Technology, will demonstrate the model and answer questions. This is an opportunity for residents to observe the groundwater bores and water levels in the Howard East Aquifer in one 3D view. The public can then apply for copies of the model on disc for installation in their home computer. Other local experts will be available to answer questions from the public relating to the Howard Springs aquifer.

The Independent Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, will facilitate question time and be available to answer questions

Further Information:

Ms Sharna Nolan phone: 08 8944 8420 email: Sharna.Nolan@csiro.au
Project website www.track.gov.au/project/howard-east,

Public Meeting Details:

When: 6:30 pm, Wednesday September 9th 2009
Where: Girraween Primary School, Carruth Road, Howard Springs
Who's invited?: All members of the community are invited.
Contact: Ms Sharna Nolan ph: 8944 8420

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