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Coordinator's Corner

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The theme for this year's Governor's Water Conference focuses on groundwater issues and I think that's an extremely important sign for the water well drilling industry. Frequently overlooked in some parts of the state, groundwater is a tremendous resource for Oklahoma. As reported by the USGS, Oklahoma used an estimated 773.7 million gallons per day of groundwater in 2000. Just think of the health concerns as well as economic challenges that would exist without the presence of good, clean groundwater in this state. That makes your job, as an industry representative charged to protect this resource, even more significant.

I would like to thank Charles Migliorino, Johnston County District Attorney, who provided much needed legal assistance during a recent trial of an unlicensed well driller. Mr. Migliorino suggested that we improve our statutes and regulations to provide more enforcement tools in this type of situation. Even though enforcement is not the most pleasant part of my job, it is important that all drillers operate under the same set of standards.

Finally, we are currently in the proposed rulemaking period for the 2006 legislature session. If you have any comments or changes you would like to propose, please submit them to me or to one of the Well Driller and Pump Installer Council members.

JUDGE SENTENCES UNLAWFUL WELL DRILLER

A Johnston County district court judge has sentenced a local water well driller on criminal contempt charges for disregarding previous court orders to suspend his business, which was responsible for numerous unlawful and poorly constructed wells in southern Oklahoma.

In July, Max Jones, owner of Jones Water Well Drilling, pled guilty to violating the Honorable Robert M. Highsmith's order, issued in February 2002, enjoining Jones from drilling water wells as a commercial business. The previous order included a permanent injunction against Jones' company from drilling or plugging groundwater wells and test holes.

Jones was responsible for numerous violations of minimum well construction standards. Water Board field inspectors identified the infractions in 2001 at multiple well sites in Johnston, Marshall, and Bryan Counties. The most common violation was that wells drilled by Jones lacked the required cement surface seal, the primary mechanism to prevent contamination of groundwater.

In separate court orders issued September 13 and 19, the Judge (continued)



This well, typical of the primary violations for which Jones was responsible, lacks the required cement grout surface seal. To repair the well, the OWRB had the cuttings and gravel pack removed from the upper 10 feet of the borehole followed by installation of a proper seal.

Judge Sentences Driller . . . continued

formally sentenced Jones to 14 days in the Johnston County jail. Judge Highsmith's initial order states "in this case, the defendant was ordered and enjoined from water well drilling and had appeared in this court multiple times, but still determined to drill wells for a fee. The act of the defendant was certainly a criminal contempt and is subject to restitution."

An associated 5-year sentence was deferred upon the condition that Jones ceases any future water well construction. In addition, Judge Highsmith granted more than \$6,000 in restitution for the victims to recover drilling charges as well as costs associated with remedial work required to plug the wells and/or bring them into compliance with state well construction standards.

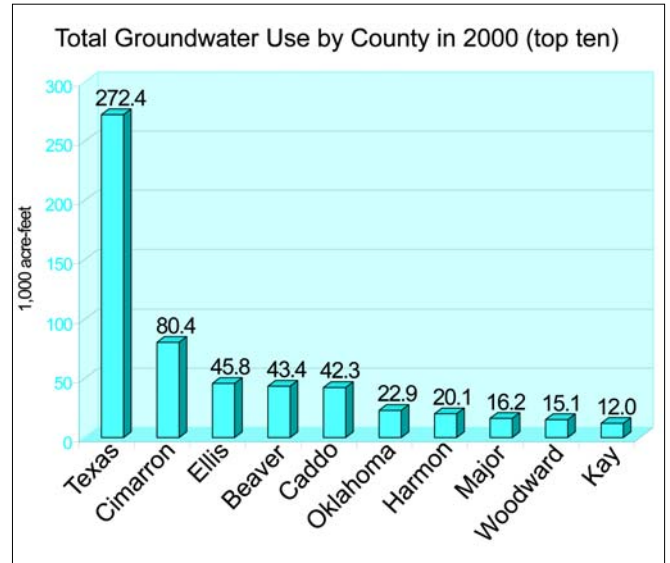
According to state law, all water wells in Oklahoma must be constructed by a licensed driller. Citizens interested in establishing a water well should ask potential drillers for a copy of their license prior to construction. Citizens who have questions about the validity of a particular water well driller, concerns about construction of a water well, or related questions can contact Kent Wilkins at (405) 530-8800.

UTILIZATION OF OKLAHOMA'S GROUNDWATER

According to the USGS, the total quantity of freshwater withdrawals for all purposes in 2000 was estimated to be 1,772 million gallons per day (mgd). Irrigation withdrawals accounted for 40 percent of the total withdrawals and water supply accounted for 38 percent.

Total groundwater withdrawal in Oklahoma was about 773.7 mgd, 44 percent of all freshwater withdrawals. Irrigation withdrawals accounted for 73 percent of groundwater withdrawals.

The top 3 counties with drawing groundwater for irrigation were Texas (253.6 mgd), Cimarron (77.2 mgd), and Ellis (42.5 mgd). Public water supply withdrawals accounted for 15 percent of groundwater withdrawals. The top 3 counties withdrawing groundwater for public supply were Oklahoma (17.6 mgd), Cleveland (8.9 mgd), and Kay (8.3 mgd).



Total groundwater use by the top ten counties is shown on the graph above.

