

## Groundwater – An Important Natural Resource

Groundwater is the water beneath the land surface that fills the spaces in rock and sediment. It is replenished by precipitation. Under natural conditions much of that recharge returns to the atmosphere by evapotranspiration from plants and trees or discharges to surface waters. Groundwater discharge to surface waters allows streams to flow beyond rain and snowmelt periods and sustains lake levels during dry spells. Groundwater occurs everywhere in Minnesota, but the availability of groundwater for water supplies vary throughout the state. Availability for larger withdrawals may be limited in some areas. Groundwater supplies about 75 percent of Minnesota's drinking water and nearly 90 percent of the water used for agricultural irrigation.

Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources established a ground water level monitoring program in 1944 to monitor groundwater supply and trends throughout the state. The network of wells monitored has grown to 750 observation wells. There are 13 of these wells in Todd County that are monitored by Todd SWCD staff eight times per year. The data collected is submitted to DNR online and is used to track annual variations and trends. Recent weather trends have brought discussion of increasing the number of observation wells in areas with expanding irrigation and urban growth.

More information on MN DNR's Groundwater Level Monitoring Program and special reports on groundwater trends can be found at DNR's website ([www.dnr.ste.mn.us/waters/groundwater](http://www.dnr.ste.mn.us/waters/groundwater)).