

2009 Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Fen Well Monitoring Report

Prepared for:
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District



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Prepared by:
Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District



Introduction

A series of calcareous fens and trout streams run parallel to the Minnesota River, along the northwestern edge of Dakota County, in an area located roughly between I-494 and Hwy. 77. Groundwater monitoring wells have been installed in these fens to determine if groundwater, originating from upland areas, is providing enough cool groundwater to recharge these valuable natural resources (Appendix 1).

Several government agencies, including the United States Geological Survey, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), the Metropolitan Council, and the Ft. Snelling State Park have been involved in monitoring groundwater resources in this area. However, in recent years, very little monitoring has taken place. In order to continue documenting groundwater levels, the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) began contracting with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in 2007, to collect monthly “depth to water” measurements, for a network of 28 fen wells. In 2009, the LMRWD contracted with the SWCD to continue collecting monthly well measurements.

2009 Activities

- Monthly “depth to water” measurements were collected at all wells.
- Coordinated with MNDNR staff to create a map based, web access page for well monitoring data (http://climate.umn.edu/ground_water_level_LMRWD/).
- Discontinued January and February fen well measurement in an attempt to minimize costs, especially since most of the wells are frozen in the winter months.

Weather Summary

Groundwater levels are often influenced by recent precipitation, especially in relatively shallow wells, similar to those monitored in the LMRWD. The 2007-2009 average monthly precipitation was 2.19 inches and has been relatively consistent on an annual basis, with larger amounts occurring during mid-summer (Figure 1). When compared against 50 year precipitation records, 2009 (23.6 inches) was substantially drier than the 50 year average (28.9 inches).

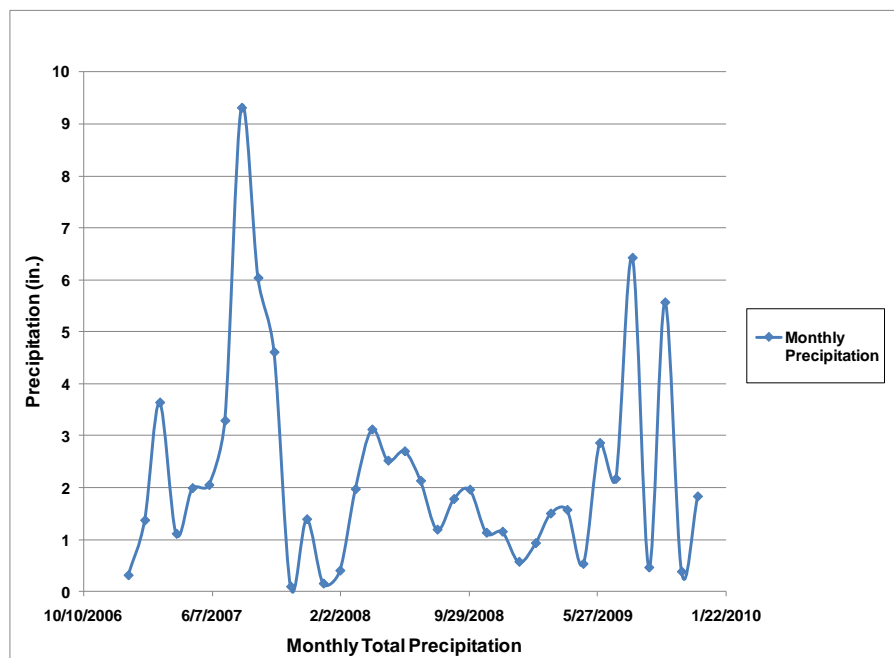


Figure 1. 2007-2009 Minneapolis/ St. Paul International Airport Monthly Precipitation Results

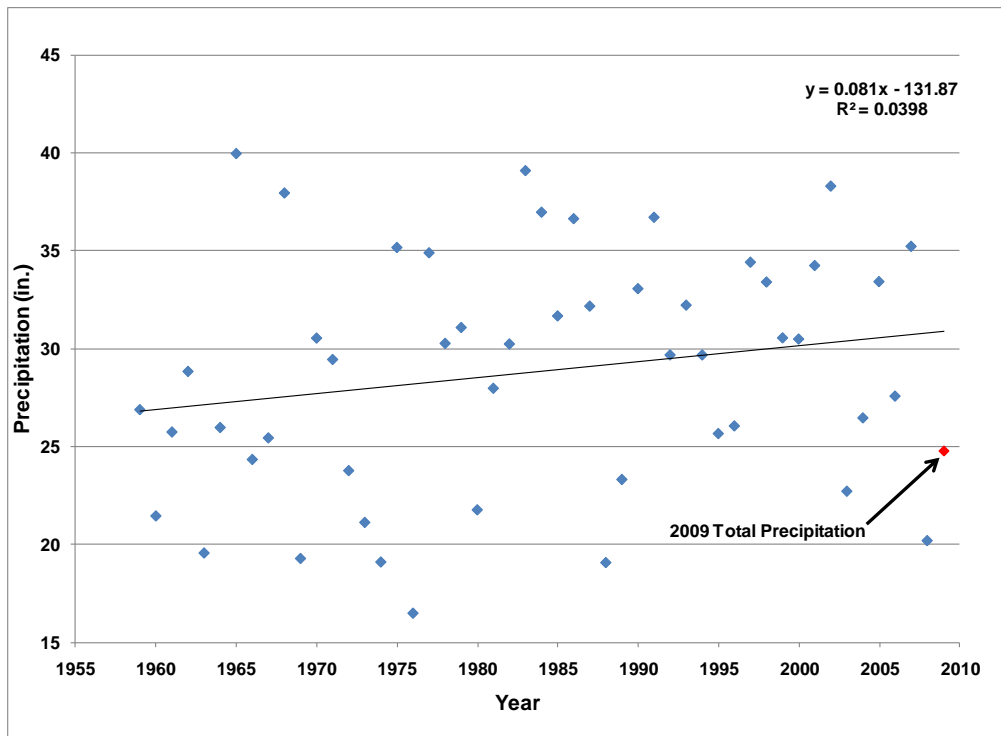


Figure 2. Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport 50 Year (1959-2009) Annual Precipitation Record

Quarry Island Fen Results

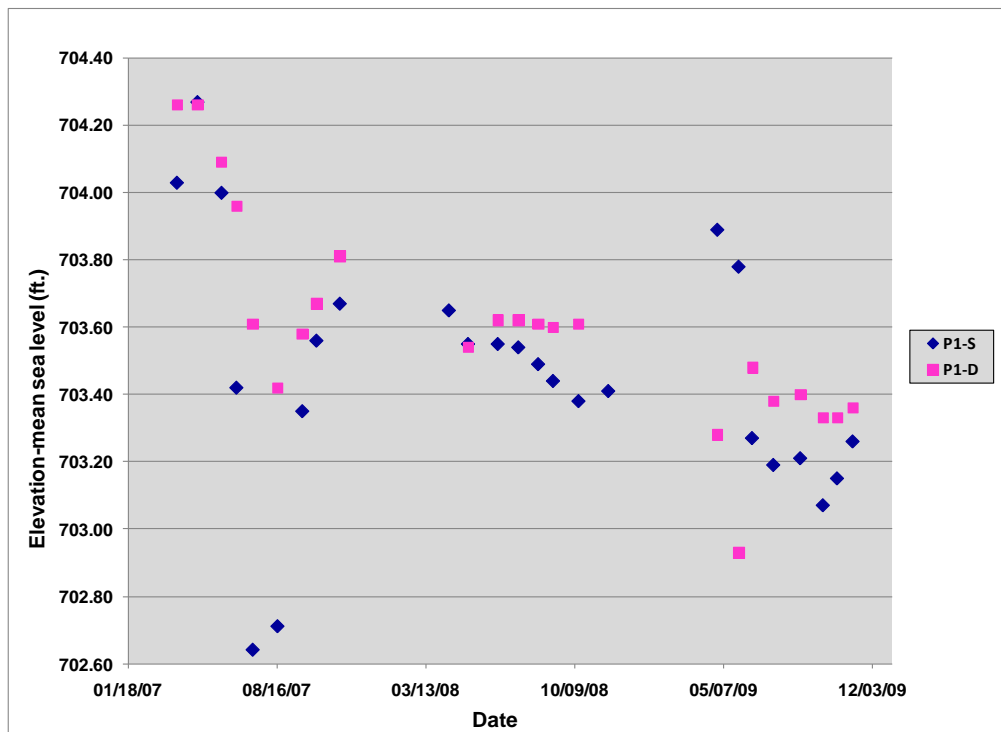


Figure 3. 2007-2009 Quarry Island Fen Well Monitoring Results

Snelling Fen Results

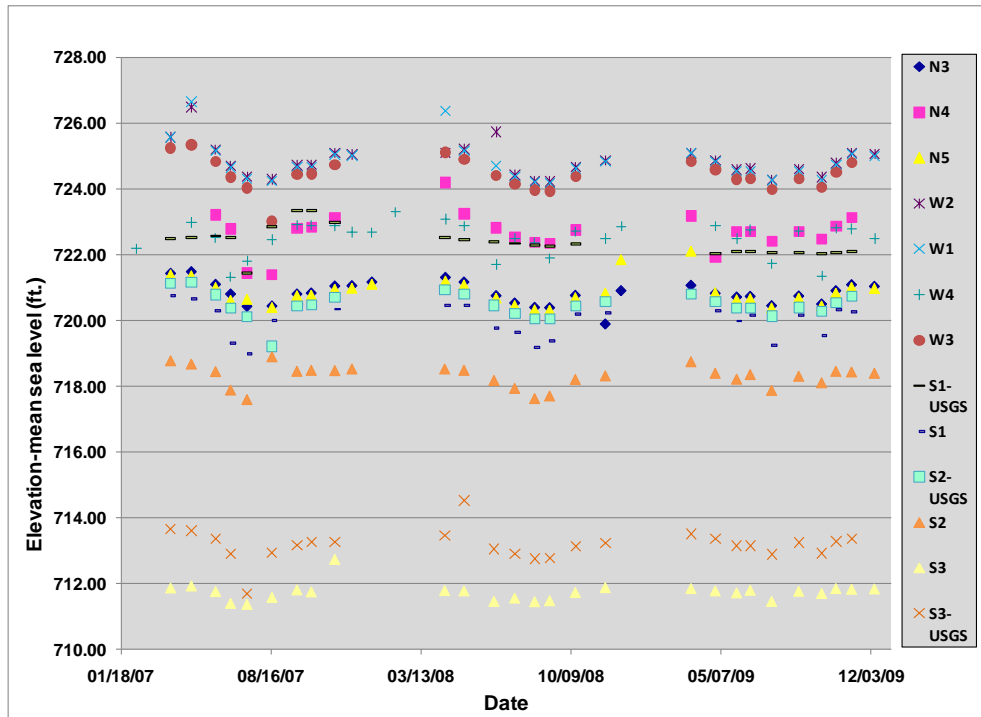


Figure 4. 2007-2009 Snelling Fen Well Monitoring Results

Nichols Fen Results

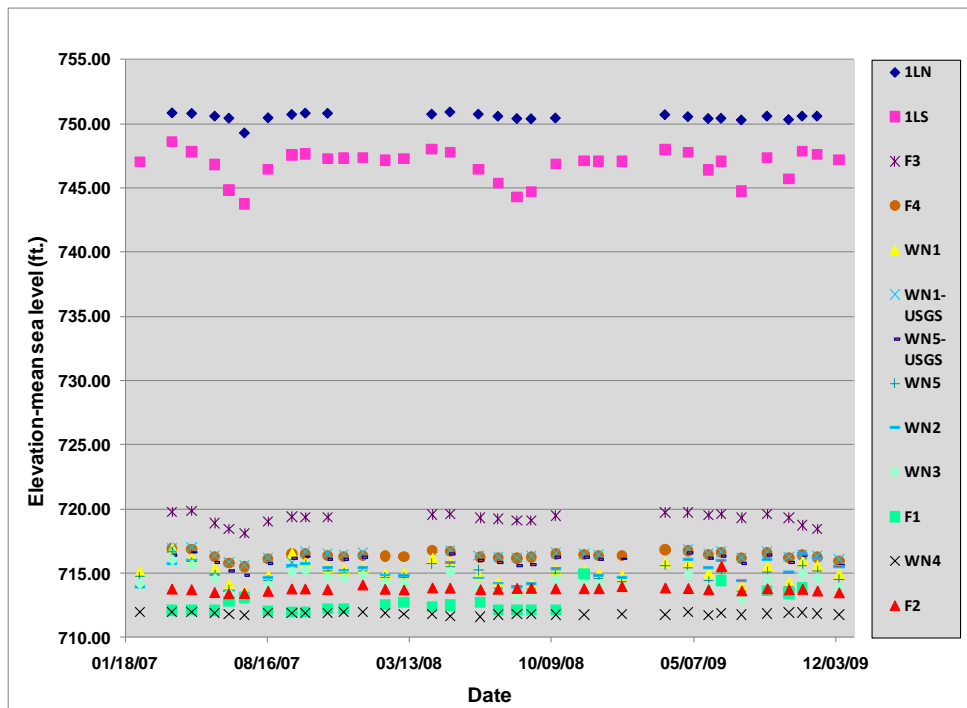


Figure 5. 2007-2009 Nichols Fen Well Monitoring Results

Discussion

Water elevations among the 2007-2009 monitoring years have been relatively consistent and follow similar annual patterns in the Snelling and Nichols fens (Figures 4-5). Water elevations in the shallow wells of the Quarry Island Fen appear to be less consistent and slightly decreasing (Figure 3). In general, water elevations have decreased during dry summer months, and rebounded as precipitation increased in the fall. Although monthly fen well measurements do not closely mirror recent precipitation patterns, measurements do reflect general precipitation trends, especially during summertime periods of low rainfall.

Due to the brief period of record for this monitoring effort, a limited regression analysis was performed on the datasets for each well. A trend line was fitted to monthly data from each well to determine if water levels are increasing or decreasing (Table 1). A “goodness of fit” test was completed for all trend lines, with R^2 values ranging from 0 to 0.6145. Due to these low R^2 values, all trends should be considered weak.

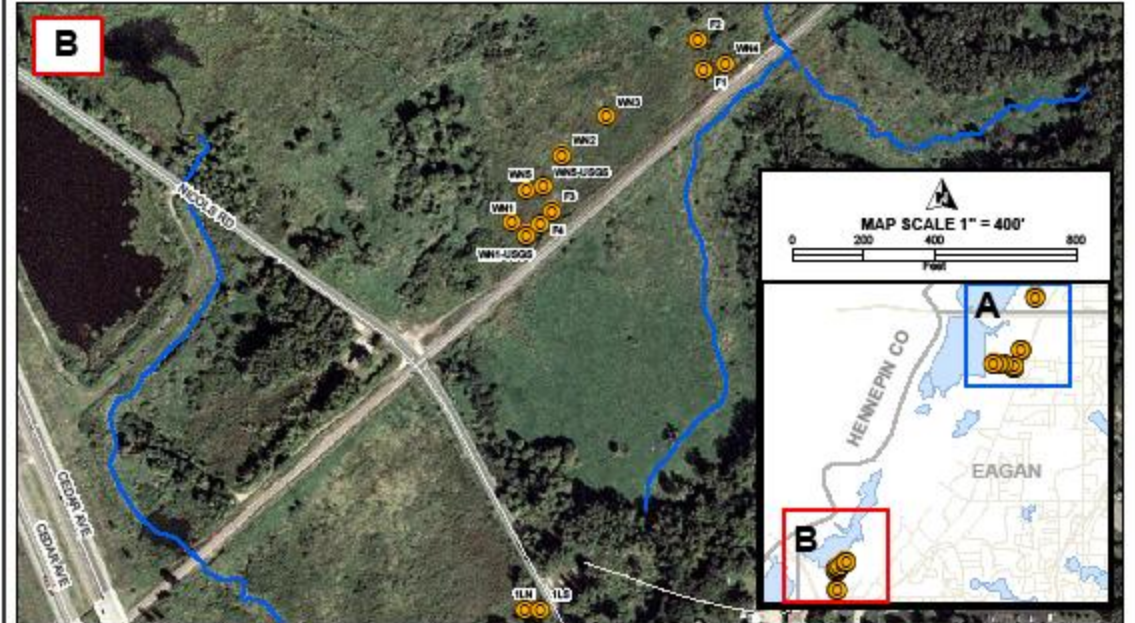
Based upon this analysis, water elevations in the Quarry Island and Fort Snelling fens appear to be decreasing across most wells, but these trends are generally weak (low R^2). However, one of the Quarry Island fens, P1-D, is beginning to show a stronger decreasing trend ($R^2 = 0.6145$). This trend could be due to local land and groundwater use or may simply be the result of recent dry weather (Figures 1-2). Additional monthly measurements are needed to expand upon existing baseline data and to provide for a stronger trend analysis in future reports.

Table 1. 2007-09 Fen Well Regression Analysis

| Quarry Island Fen Trends | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Well | 2007-09 Trend | R^2 (Trend Fit) |
| P1-S | - | 0.0795 |
| P1-D | - | 0.6145 |
| Fort Snelling Fen Trends | | |
| Well | 2007-09 Trend | R^2 (Trend Fit) |
| N3 | - | 0.0700 |
| N4 | + | 0.0044 |
| N5 | - | 0.0079 |
| W2 | - | 0.0983 |
| W1 | - | 0.0981 |
| W4 | - | 0.0006 |
| W3 | - | 0.0278 |
| S1-USGS | - | 0.3003 |
| S1 | - | 0.0215 |
| S2-USGS | - | 0.0110 |
| S2 | - | 0.0219 |
| S3 | - | 0.0001 |
| S3-USGS | + | 0 |
| Nichols Fen Trends | | |
| Well | 2007-09 Trend | R^2 (Trend Fit) |
| 1LN | - | 0.0050 |
| 1LS | + | 0 |
| F3 | + | 0.0097 |
| F4 | + | 0.0009 |
| WN1 | - | 0.0162 |
| WN1-USGS | + | 0.0009 |
| WN5-USGS | + | 0.0299 |
| WN5 | - | 0.0196 |
| WN2 | + | 0.1304 |
| WN3 | - | 0.0765 |
| F1 | + | 0.4240 |
| WN4 | - | 0.0614 |
| F2 | + | 0.0508 |

Suggestions for future monitoring:

- Continue collecting monthly measurements to help identify annual and long term trends in fen water table elevations.



Legend
 Monitoring Sites

Appendix 1
FEN WELL MONITORING LOCATIONS

This drawing is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data located in various City, County, and State Offices and other sources, affecting the area shown, and is to be used for reference purposes only. Dakota County SWCD is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained. If discrepancies are found please contact the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District at 651.480.7777.