

2019 Annual Report
Powder River Basin Controlled Groundwater Area
Technical Advisory Committee

Introduction

The Powder River Basin Controlled Groundwater Area (PRBCGA) was established to protect existing water users from impacts resulting from coal bed methane (CBM) development. The Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (MBOGC) implements the PRBCGA through regulations that require characterization, monitoring, and evaluation of ground-water conditions, and mitigation of impacts to existing water users.

A technical advisory committee (TAC) was established to oversee the ground-water characterization, monitoring, and evaluation requirements of the PRBCGA. TAC consists of five members selected by DNRC for their expertise in hydrogeology, water quality, and CBM extraction systems and operations. Two additional ex-officio members represent the CBM industry, and water user and conservation interests. In addition to overseeing monitoring and reporting requirements for individual fields, TAC is assigned to review groundwater data and scientific evidence related to the PRBCGA and make recommendations to the MBOGC regarding mitigation of impacts.

The purpose of this report is to describe the impacts of CBM development on groundwater resources through September 2018.

Groundwater Monitoring

The TAC did not meet in 2019. There are 122 currently monitored sites in the Powder River Controlled Groundwater Area. Most monitoring sites are scheduled for twice yearly visits although many have data loggers. The TAC has no specific mitigation recommendations at this time.

Current Activity

CBM production in both Montana and Wyoming has been declining since 2008 and no new Groundwater Monitoring and Development Plans subject to review by the TAC have been submitted in the last year. The current level of CBM production in Montana is shown in the figure below. It has been relatively steady for the last few years; generally, between 35 to 40 active wells.

