

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOSTON GROUNDWATER TRUST  
ON PUMPING/DRAINING GROUNDWATER

Whenever groundwater is pumped or drained from an enclosed space and drawn away from the site, the surrounding groundwater levels are lowered to an elevation approaching that of the pump or drain. This removal of groundwater is the most prominent cause of the exposure of wood piling tops that can cause foundation damage. The Trust believes that every effort should be made to reduce and ultimately eliminate this pumping in areas of concern for low groundwater levels. While the zoning restrictions imposed in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District and under the Boston Redevelopment Authority's Article 80 Project Review procedures address this issue for new construction and substantial renovation projects, the issue is important for below ground spaces not covered by them.

It is, therefore, the recommendation of the Boston Groundwater Trust that the following steps be taken:

1. A major effort should be undertaken to educate property owners about the need to avoid pumping by waterproofing their underground spaces. This should include the groundwater pamphlet being developed by the Mayor's Office of Energy and Environmental Services, in cooperation with the BGWT and the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, and outreach to the media.
2. The BWSC should develop a method to enforce the Commission's policy that no groundwater be pumped to any sanitary or combined sewers without a permit. Economic penalties for pumping should be large enough to encourage those who might otherwise remove groundwater to waterproof their structures instead. Critical to this method will be a way to identify potential sources of the pumping or drainage. The Inspectional Services Department and the BGwT should cooperate in developing and implementing a way to identify such sources.
3. As part of the City-State Groundwater Working Group participating agencies should take all feasible efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate groundwater pumping or drainage in areas of concern. Where no feasible alternative to pumping or drainage of existing structures exist, agencies should develop recharge mitigation plans that utilize the pumped or drained groundwater/stormwater.