

Groundwater Conservation Practices Evaluation

Groundwater conservation practices will be evaluated by the Boston Groundwater Trust through a team of engineers from Tufts University.

At their meeting on July 30, Trustees of the Boston Groundwater Trust voted to fund a research project to quantify improvements on groundwater levels in Boston resulting from rainwater recharge systems instituted by the City. Neighborhoods included are all or part of Beacon Hill, Back Bay, Fenway, South End, Bay Village, Chinatown, and the Leather District; areas that are in the City's Groundwater Conservation Overlay District.

The year-long project will be conducted by Professor Richard Vogel of Tufts University and Brian Thomas, a Professional Geologist. It will use groundwater level data that has been gathered by the Boston Groundwater Trust over the previous 10 years as well as data on the size, location, and type of recharge systems that have been installed. It will develop a mathematical model to demonstrate and quantify the benefit of recharge systems.

Recharge systems have been required to be installed under Article 32 of Boston's Zoning Code, which established the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District in 2006. This is part of the City's efforts to protect buildings where wood piling foundations are threatened by rot from declining groundwater levels.

The Boston Groundwater Trust is a non-profit organization established by the Boston City Council in 1986 to monitor low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. It has developed a network of 800 groundwater observation wells, from which it reads water levels 7-8 times annually and publishes the data for public information. Its Board of Trustees, all of whom serve without compensation, includes nine members appointed by the Mayor at the suggestion of designated organizations, three appointed ex-officio by the Mayor, and one appointed ex-officio by the President of the City Council.

For more information, please contact Elliott Laffer, executive director, at 617-859-8439 or elaffer@bgwt.org. More details on the groundwater issue and all current and historical observation well readings are posted on the Trust's website, www.bostongroundwater.org.