

Well Reading Ceremony

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Boston Groundwater Trust will commemorate the completion of its groundwater observation well network with a ceremonial reading of the final well on Tuesday, September 26, at 10:00 A.M. The ceremony will take place on Chandler Street near the corner of Columbus Avenue in the South End. Expected to speak about this important milestone are Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi, Chief of Commonwealth Development Andrew Gottlieb, and Trust Co-chair Gary Saunders.

The ceremony marks the culmination of a three year installation process during which more than 700 observation wells have been installed in neighborhoods of Boston where the integrity of building foundations can be threatened by lowered groundwater levels. The wells were primarily funded under the Commonwealth's Environmental Bond Bill, with supplemental matching funding from a U.S. EPA grant secured through the efforts of Rep. Michael Capuano. The wells, along with about 100 that previously existed, are used by the Boston Groundwater Trust to monitor groundwater levels throughout the area. All current and historic readings are posted on the Trust's website, www.bostongroundwater.org. In the future, wells may be added to the network as the data indicates a need for more localized information and as new projects are built that require that levels nearby be more closely monitored. It will be critically important that all of the wells are monitored in the future so that we will always have rapid notice of any unanticipated changes in groundwater levels.

Boston is particularly vulnerable to groundwater-related foundation problems because so many of its older buildings were constructed on land that was reclaimed from the harbor, the Charles River, and other bodies of water from the seventeenth through the early part of the twentieth centuries. Among the neighborhoods affected are the Fenway, Back Bay, South End, Bay Village, Chinatown, Beacon Hill, North End waterfront, South Boston, and East Boston. This made land generally could not support any type of masonry structure, so wooden pilings (upside down tree trunks with the branches removed) were driven through the fill to stronger soil. These wooden pilings will last for centuries if they remain in saturated soil. However, if the groundwater level drops, microbes can start to feed on the wood, leading to rot and eventual loss of the ability to support the building.

The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council in 1986 to monitor groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Mayor Menino appointed new trustees and the City began to fund Trust operations in 1997. Its volunteer,

unpaid trustees are nominated by designated residential and business organizations. Details about the organization and its staff can be found at www.bostongroundwater.org.

For more information on the event or the Boston Groundwater Trust, please contact the Trust's Executive Director, Elliott Laffer, at 617-859-8439 or elaffer@BGWT.org.