



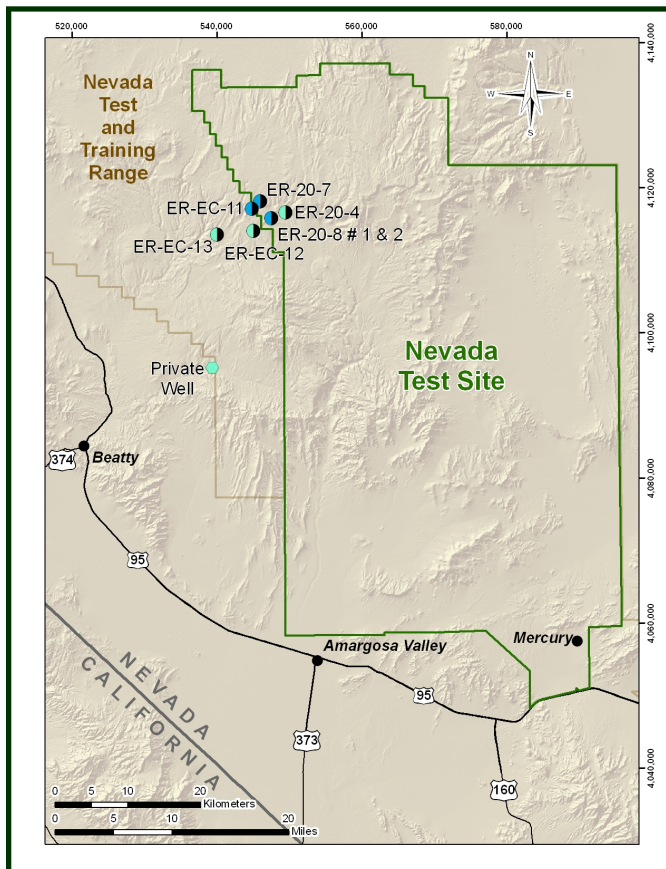
December 2, 2009

Nevada Site Office Environmental Management

EM NEWS FLASH

Valuable Groundwater Information Obtained at Four New Wells Drilled on and Near the Nevada Test Site

The remote area around Pahute Mesa has seen a flurry of activity since May, when the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office began construction of new characterization wells both on and adjacent to the Nevada Test Site (NTS). Drilling and sampling of these wells provides valuable information and a better understanding of the groundwater and subsurface environment. This knowledge is essential to assure that DOE protects the public from exposure to water sources contaminated by historic underground nuclear testing.



The blue/black dots represent characterization wells drilled in 2009. The green/black dots are the planned well locations where drilling will begin in the spring of 2010. The private well notated is the nearest public water source.

Funding was identified for the construction of nine wells over three years (including some from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to accelerate the work). However, an additional unplanned well was constructed in order to overcome subsurface environmental challenges experienced while drilling the second planned well. This additional well also addressed feedback communicated by the State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). The Nevada Site Office has regularly communicated drilling progress and sampling results to both the NDEP and the [Community Advisory Board for Nevada Test Site Programs \(CAB\)](#) throughout well construction and laboratory analysis.

As scientific transport modeling had predicted, sampling results confirmed the presence of radioactive contamination at all four wells drilled this year. Three of the four wells, including the well located beyond the Nevada Test Site boundary on the federally-controlled Nevada Test and

Training Range, were below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency *Safe Drinking Water Act* Standards.

Development of the transport model is a foundation of the [Nevada Site Office Underground Test Area \(UGTA\) Sub-Project](#) strategy for ensuring public safety. The transport model is a predictive graphic representation of data gathered from well drilling and sampling and is constantly refined with the incorporation of new information. Hence, the locations for the new characterization wells were chosen for optimal information gathering, and are prioritized based upon the need for more specific data to improve the model. The confirmation of contamination in the groundwater at the newly constructed characterization wells increases the confidence of the transport model. The knowledge that it took 40 years for the contaminated groundwater to move approximately two miles from nuclear test locations to the well location is important data that will be input back into the model. The nearest public water source is located approximately 14 miles from this well location.

With this knowledge, the Nevada Site Office continues to move forward with its UGTA strategy and is committed to working closely with NDEP, the CAB, and the public to share information. Earlier this year, the Nevada Site Office held an Open House in Beatty to speak with residents and other stakeholders about the transport model predictions. The Nevada Site Office plans to conduct another Open House in the spring of 2010 to discuss the recent sampling results and plan for further characterization wells. This Open House will be held in conjunction with well drilling at three new locations, two of which are located southwest of ER-EC-11 on the Nevada Test and Training Range. As well drilling and sampling progresses during the spring 2010 campaign, information will be communicated to the public at a variety of venues, including the CAB. Additional information on Nevada Test Site groundwater and/or the UGTA Sub-Project can be obtained by e-mailing envmgt@nv.doe.gov or by calling 702-295-3521.

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