

Comment Period Extended on Sole-source Aquifer Petition

Michindoh Aquifer

Bryan, Ohio

January 2010

For more information

To file a comment on the proposed designation of Michindoh Aquifer as a “sole-source” aquifer, please send your comments in writing to:

William Spaulding

EPA Region 5 (WG-15J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604
800-621-8431, Ext. 69262
spaulding.william@epa.gov

You may also contact Spaulding for additional information on the city of Bryan’s application.

You may inspect a copy of the Michindoh Sole-source Aquifer Petition at the EPA Region 5 office in Chicago (address above). Contact Spaulding for an appointment. You may also see the petition at:

Bryan Municipal Utilities Office
841 E. Edgerton St., Bryan

Williams County Public Library
107 E. High St., Bryan

Hillsdale Community Library
11 E. Bacon St., Hillsdale, Mich.

Lenawee County Library
4459 W. U.S. 223, Adrian, Mich.

Butler Public Library
340 S. Broadway, Butler, Ind.

Hudson Public Library
205 S. Market St., Hudson, Mich.

Or visit:

www.epa.gov/region5/water/gwdw/michindoh/index.htm

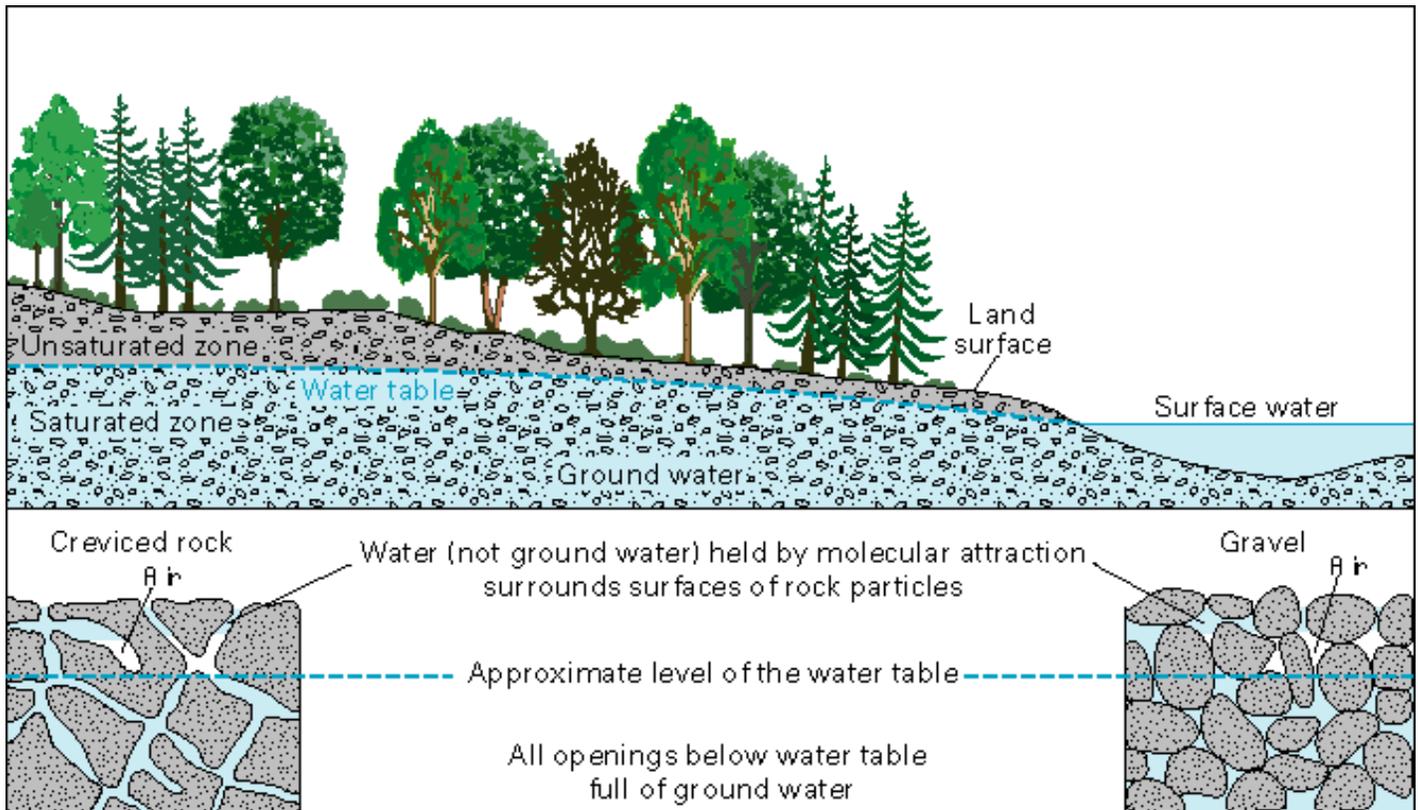
Area residents now have more time to comment on an application from the city of Bryan, Ohio, to designate the Michindoh Aquifer as a “sole-source” aquifer. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency heard from the public at two meetings and a formal public hearing in January and decided to extend the public comment period to **Friday, April 16** (see box, left).

The city originally filed its petition for the sole-source designation in October 2007. After a detailed review, EPA announced its preliminary decision to approve the request and opened a public comment period. The Agency extended the comment period once and conducted public meetings in two area cities. The second extension is in response to what EPA officials heard at those events.

The Safe Drinking Water Act gives EPA the authority to designate sole-source aquifer areas as a way to protect supplies of drinking water. Such a designation means EPA is obligated to review all federally funded projects that could contaminate the aquifer. EPA’s review could prompt a requirement for more stringent design changes and could even deny federal funding.



This map shows the location of the St. Joseph and Tiffin river basins, which approximately overlie the boundaries of the proposed Michindoh Sole-source Aquifer. The aquifer area is under all or part of nine counties in three states. Source: Bryan Public Utilities.



This diagram shows a typical aquifer. Ground water is found in spaces between underground rocks, or in areas of gravel or sand. Ground water is always below the water table. Lakes, rivers and streams are called "surface water." Source: U.S. Geological Survey.

Definitions and background

An aquifer is a porous geologic formation, usually consisting of sand and gravel, which holds water. This is called "ground water," and it is often tapped to provide drinking water. EPA defines a sole-source aquifer as one that supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water consumed in the area overlying the aquifer, and where contamination would present both a significant public health hazard and an economic hardship in the high cost of replacing the contaminated water.

The proposed Michindoh Sole-source Aquifer Area includes all of Ohio's Williams County and parts of Defiance and Fulton counties in Ohio; Allen, DeKalb and Steuben counties in Indiana; and Hillsdale, Lenawee and Branch counties in Michigan. The proposed designation was based on a geologic study of the area that evaluated where the ground water is located and how it flows, as well as soil characteristics and an economic analysis of census data.

Federal financial assistance can be any financial benefit provided as aid to a specific project through a

department or agency of the federal government. Examples of projects typically reviewed by EPA include major highway improvement projects, new transit centers, public water supply improvements, wastewater treatment facilities, projects that involve management of animal waste, and housing subdivisions or other building projects that are not served by water, sewer and storm drainage systems.

These reviews include federal grant or loan applications to U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency and Farmers Home Administration, and U.S. Department of Urban Development.

EPA's role in the review of agricultural projects has traditionally been to coordinate with the USDA funding agency to ensure adequate ground water protection safeguards are included in the project design. EPA could ask the funding agency to make sure the applicant is aware of and follows the most appropriate and feasible agricultural management practices. For example, livestock operations seeking

federal loans for herd expansions could be required to ensure they follow appropriate waste disposal practices and have adequate animal waste management facilities in place to handle the additional waste. Projects submitted by applicants seeking federal funds to establish or install conservation practices that improve overall water quality are typically not reviewed by EPA.

Project delays will be minimal unless the EPA review finds the proposed project or activity could create a significant public health hazard. Projects are screened using predetermined criteria by the funding agency soon after project applications are received. EPA typically reviews and comments within 30 days. If EPA makes no comments within that time, the proposal is considered to be EPA-approved.

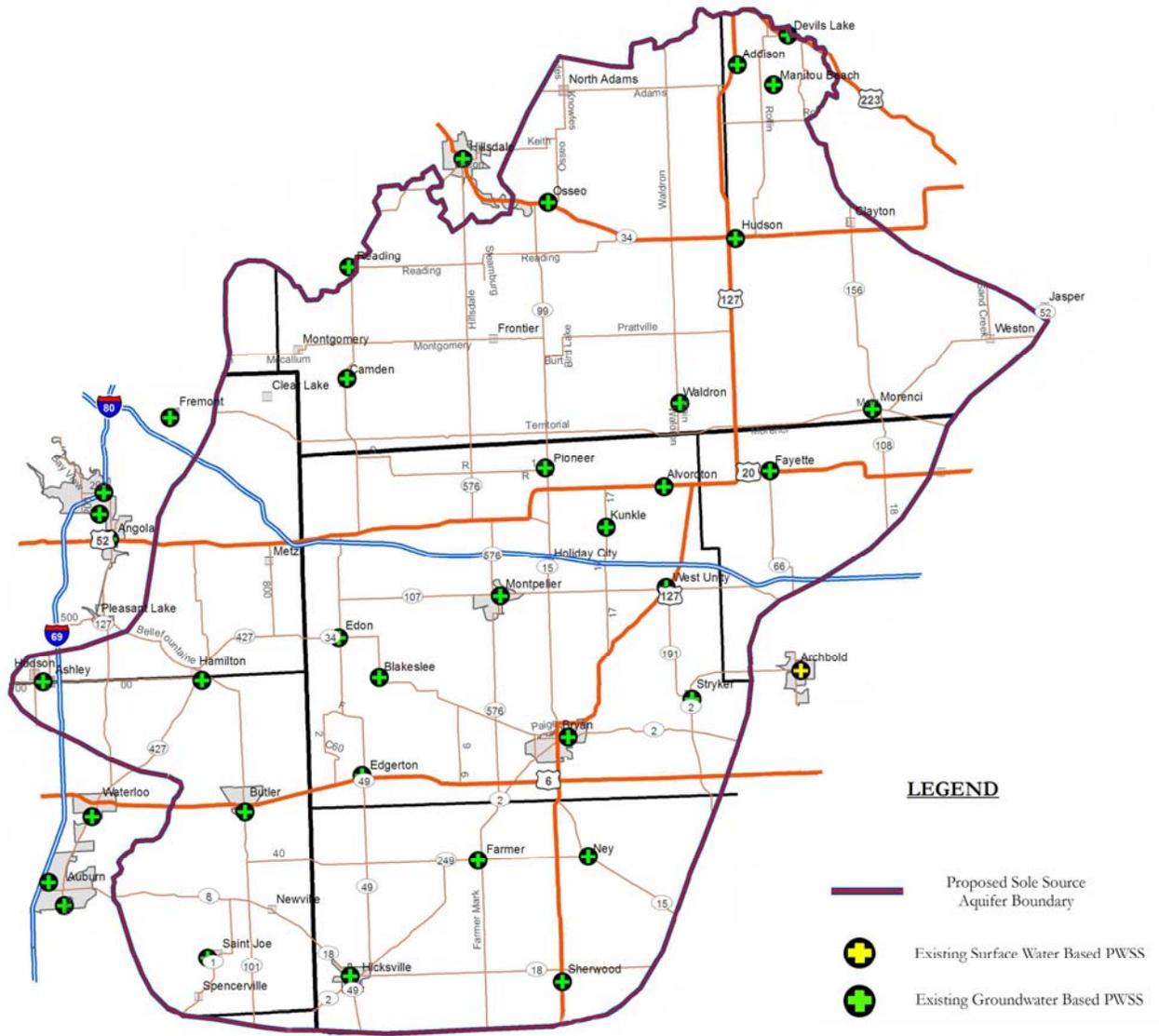
Federally funded new wells and water supply systems must be designed and constructed so that public health is not threatened. This means well and treatment structures are constructed in low-risk settings using design and materials that enable the system to maintain compliance with EPA drinking water standards. Treatment and conveyance systems need to be installed using environmentally safe construction and materials handling practices.

According to Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, any individual, corporation, company, association, partnership, state, municipality or federal agency is qualified to submit a formal request, or "petition," for SSA designation. Petitions must contain

sufficient technical information to evaluate whether the aquifer meets EPA's designation criteria. EPA reviews the petition and – if it meets the appropriate criteria – seeks public comments. EPA reviews all comments it receives and approves or denies the petition. The decision is published in the Federal Register and announced on the EPA Web site.

EPA received the Michindoh Aquifer SSA petition in October 2007. The petition passed a completeness review in February 2008. After a more detailed content review, the city of Bryan revised the petition to address EPA's comments. EPA asked for public comments on its preliminary decision to approve the petition Oct. 5, 2009. Based on comments received, EPA extended the comment period to Jan. 29, 2010. As a response to comments recently received, EPA is extending the comment period for a second time. EPA will review all comments received and produce a response summary, which will be available on EPA's Web site. EPA's final decision be published in the Federal Register and announced on the EPA Web site.

Projects that are to receive federal financial assistance and which have the potential to contaminate the aquifer so as to create a significant hazard to public health are subject to EPA review and approval.



This map shows the boundaries of the proposed Michindoh Sole-source Aquifer Area, as well as roads, towns and the location of public water supply systems in the region. Source: Bryan Public Utilities.