



CATHY A. RAEVSKY, DIRECTOR

MARK A. LUNDBERG, M.D., M.P.H., HEALTH OFFICER

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

## WELL DRILL ADVISORY GROUP

# MEETING NOTES

MAY 22, 2014

TAHOE ROOM ♦ 202 MIRA LOMA DRIVE, OROVILLE

### I. Preliminary Items

#### A. Call to Order

The meeting began 3:05 p.m.

#### B. Attendance

John Riley; Christina Buck (Water and Resource Conservation) and Tom Fossum (Public Works Department) attended as guests; Kristen McKillop, Elaine McSpadden, and Brad Banner attended and Environmental Health staff.

### II. Updates

A. **Drought Update:** Christina presented the latest information on rainfall, snow-pack, reservoir levels, and watertable level. John reported that there have been an unusual number of wells going dry this year.

B. **Water Conservation Ordinance:** Christina and Kristen shared background information on Chapter 33 Groundwater Conservation Ordinance that was passed as a result of Measure G in 1996. This ordinance regulates those who would like to replace their use of allocated surface water with groundwater and then sell the unused surface water.

C. **Confidentiality of Well Depth and Casing Diameter Information:** Kristen reported that she is awaiting a determination by DWR concerning whether well depth and casing diameter information can be made available to property appraisers.

### III. Grading Ordinance Revision

A. Tom reported on the current status of the county Grading Ordinance that is under revision.

### IV. April 22, 2014 Revision of the Water Well Ordinance (BCC 23B)

A. Brad reported that today (May 22) the updated Well Ordinance is in effect with new provisions relative to exploratory wells:

1. Direct communication with the property owner is required to provide staff with the opportunity to explain the requirements for exploratory wells.

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OROVILLE, CA 95965

2. Exploratory wells must remain capped and unused until the property is cleared for development through the Parcel Review process.
3. It is a violation of the ordinance for an exploratory well to be used to provide water for any purpose, including irrigation, and it is a violation of the ordinance to install a pump or provide electricity to the exploratory well.
4. Fines for violations are substantial (\$1,000, \$3,000, and \$5,000 for first, second, and third offense).
5. The Disclosure statement has been updated so that it no longer allows for water from the exploratory well to be used for irrigation.

- B. Brad provided copies of the FAQ handout and the updated ordinance.
- C. John expressed concern strongly that pump installers will be adversely impacted by the new requirements and pump installation does not require a permit and pump installers should not be cited if they install a pump for an exploratory well.
- D. Kristen explained that pump installers could readily find out if a well is exploratory by either going online with Trakit or by contacted Environmental Health. She also pointed out that the new requirements only apply to exploratory wells permitted after the May 22 effective date of the ordinance because the ordinance is not retroactive.

V. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be scheduled in October and later in the day or in early evening so that more well drillers and associated professionals will be able to attend.

VI. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.



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**Well Driller Advisory Group**

**Sign-In Sheet**

Date: 5/22/14 Location: Tahoe Rm

Name	Business or Organization	Email
Tom Fossum	Butte County Public Works	tfossum@buttecounty.net
Christina Buck	Butte County Water & Resource Conserv.	
John P. Riley	Precision Pump & Well Drilling	precisionpump@comcast.net
Brid Farmer	RCEH	_____
Etaine McSpadden	RCEM	_____
Kristen McKillip	"	lc

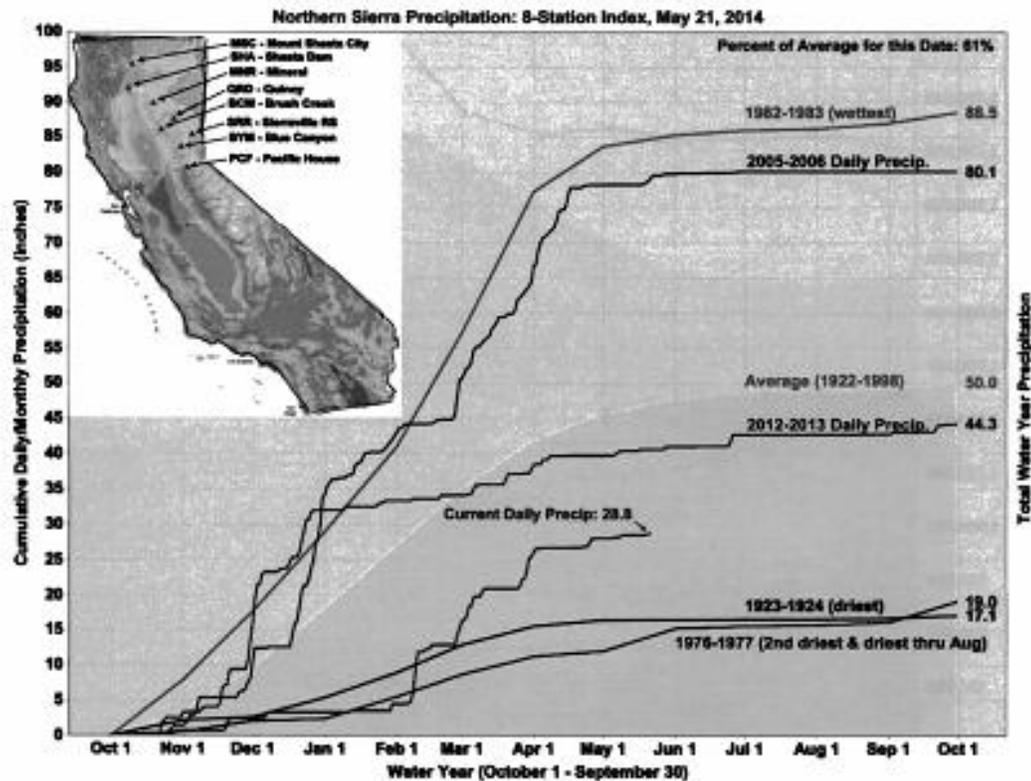
May 22, 2014

Water & Resource Conservation  
 Christina Buck: 538-6265

### HYDROLOGIC CONDITIONS

As of May 1, 2014 statewide hydrologic conditions (and Sacramento River Region, in parenthesis) were as follows (all numbers are % of average to date):

- Precipitation, 50% (60%)
- Runoff, 35% (40%)
- Snowpack, 15% (10%)
- Reservoir storage, 70% (75%)



As of May 21, 2014 the Northern Sierra 8-Station Precipitation Index Water Year total was 28.8 inches, which is about 61% of average for this date.

Data from eight precipitation stations serves as a wetness index for the Sacramento River hydrologic region. It provides a representative sample of the region's major watersheds: the upper Sacramento, Feather, Yuba, and American rivers, which produce inflow to some of California's largest reservoirs.

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The Sacramento River Region is expected to produce only 40 percent of the normal April-July runoff. In part, this will result in a 2014 water year type designation of **critical** for the Sacramento Valley.

Major reservoirs in California stand well below the historical average for May with the only exception being Pyramid Lake in the south. Lake Oroville storage tracked below 1976-1977 storage levels until the series of storms in February and March.

**Lake Oroville Storage Levels**

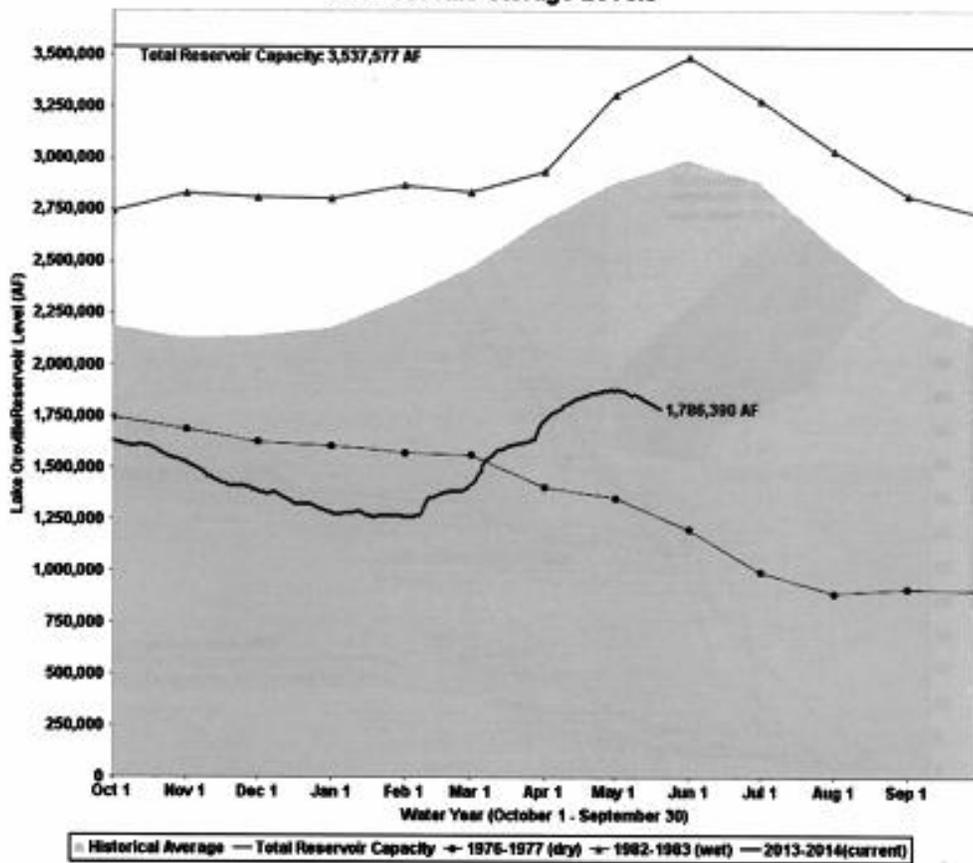
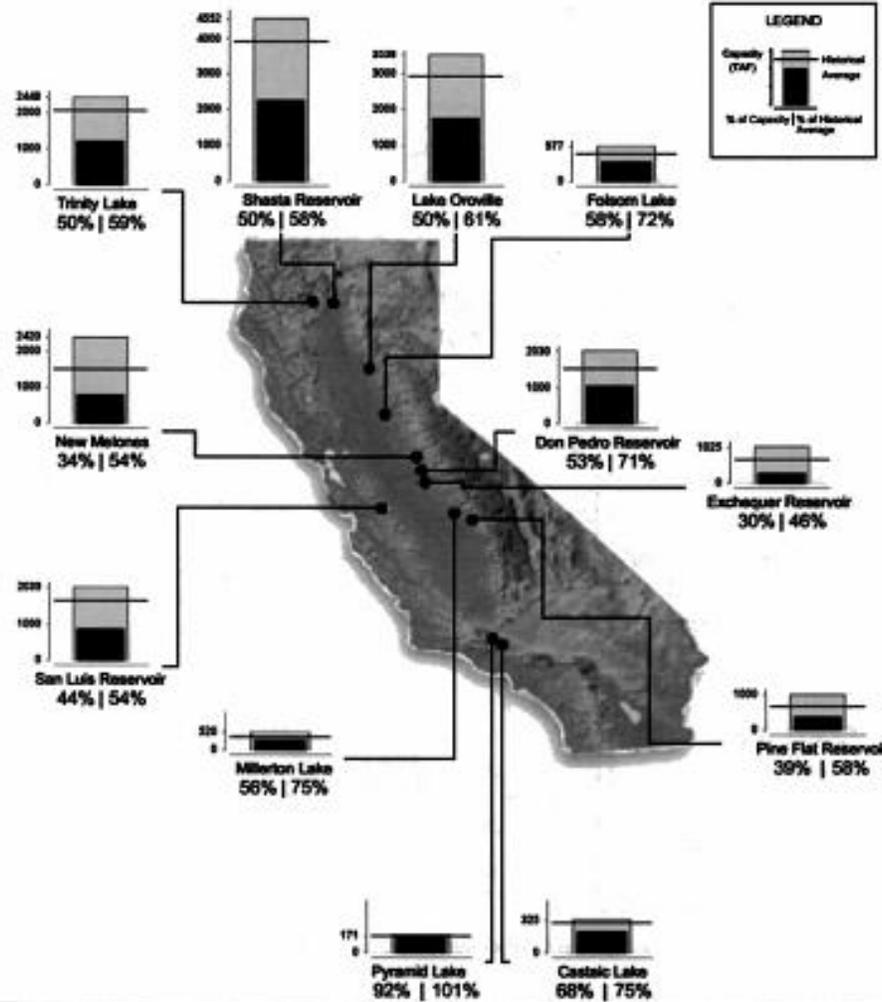


Figure 1. Lake Oroville Current Reservoir Conditions as of May 20, 2014 - storage in acre-feet

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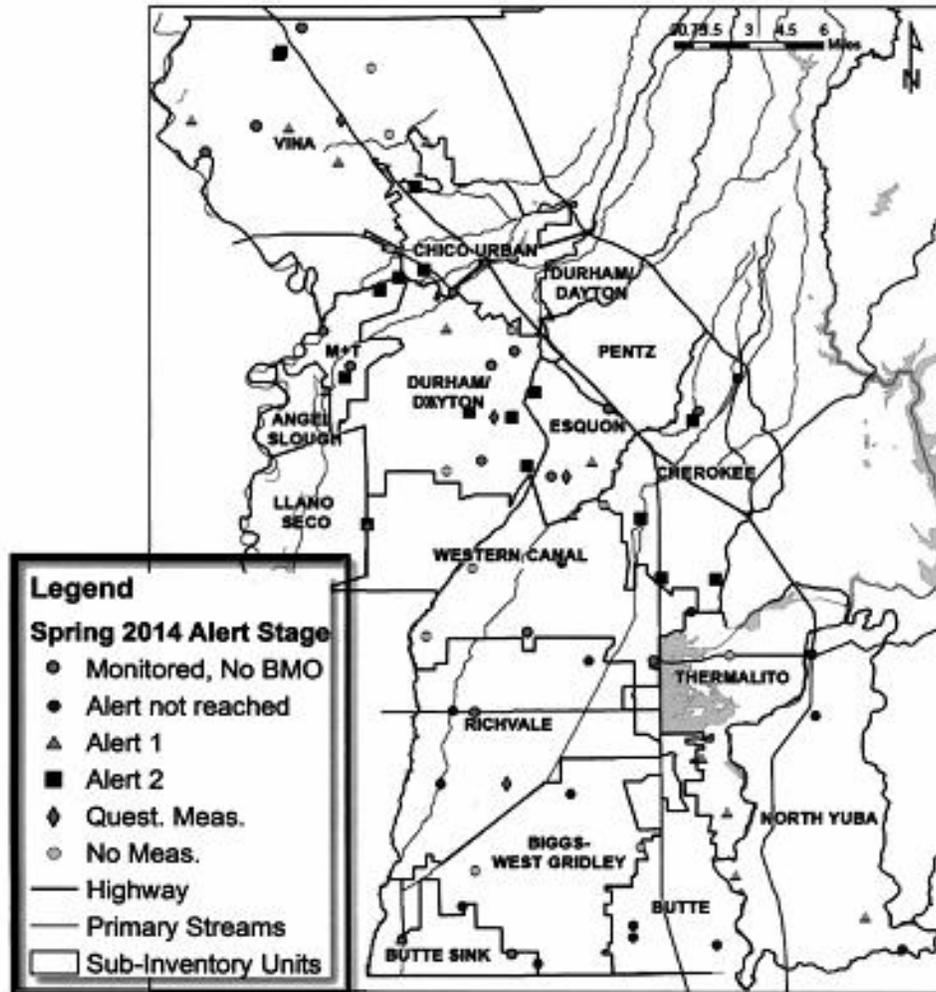
Ending At Midnight - May 20, 2014  
**CURRENT RESERVOIR CONDITIONS**



Groundwater elevations in Butte County were measured by the Department of Water Resources Northern Region the week of March 17, 2014. With historically dry conditions in 2013, groundwater levels generally were lower in March 2014 compared to spring 2013. Alert stages indicate that many wells are at or near historical lows. The map also shows that wells in an Alert stage are generally located in groundwater dependent areas and primarily in the Vina, Chico Urban Area, M&T, Durham/Dayton, Esquon, and Cherokee sub-regions.

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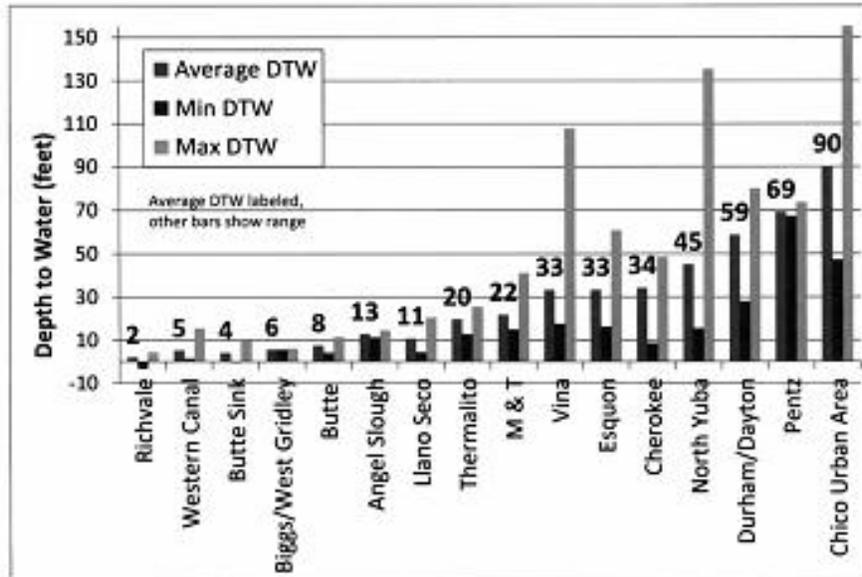
Butte County Basin Management Objective (BMO) Monitoring Wells in Alert Stage 1 and 2

Of 113 wells measured in spring 2013 and in spring 2014, 89 of them have lower levels this year compared to last spring, with an average decrease of 5 feet. The greatest decreases are in wells in the Chico Urban Area (-21 ft), Vina (-13.4 ft), Durham Dayton (-9.2 ft) and M&T (-8.8 ft) sub-regions. Twenty of the 113 wells showed moderate increases in groundwater level compared to spring 2013 (average increase of 1 ft). Overall, the average change in groundwater level was -4 feet and a number of wells remain below or near historical lows.

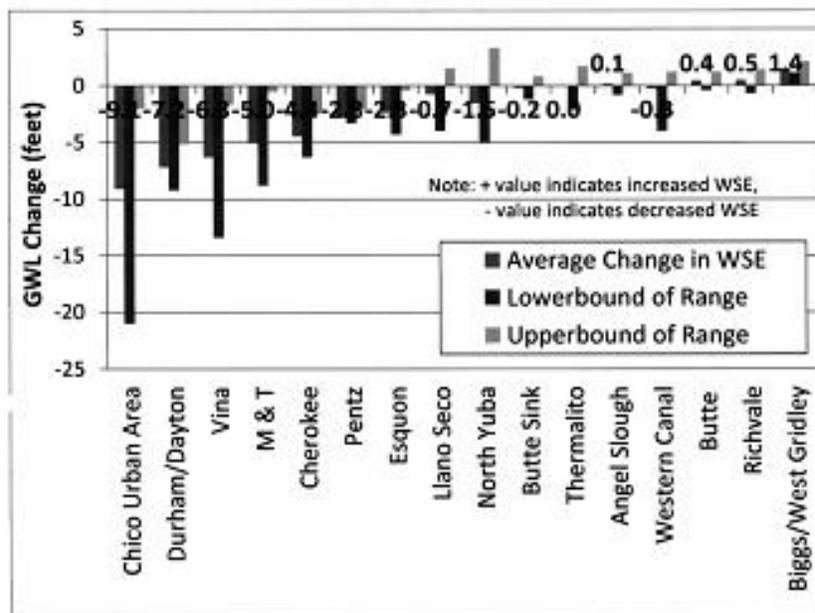
The bar graphs show information about depth to water for wells by sub-region as well as changes in groundwater level from spring 2013 to 2014. Note these averages do not account for differences in well depth, screening interval, well type, etc.

May 22, 2014

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Spring 2014 average, minimum, and maximum Depth to Water (DTW) in each sub-region with average DTW labeled.



Average, minimum, and maximum spring 2013 to spring 2014 change in groundwater levels in each sub-region, with average change labeled.



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## Exploratory Wells

### -Frequently Asked Questions-

#### Introduction

The Butte County Board of Supervisors adopted a revision of the Water Well Ordinance (BCC 23B) on April 22, 2014. Any Exploratory Well with a permit issued by Environmental Health on or after the effective date of the ordinance revision (May 22, 2014) will need to be capped and remain unused for any purpose until a Parcel Review has been completed and the parcel is approved for development by the Departments of Public Works and Development Services.

This document is intended to provide additional information about Exploratory Wells and the requirements of the Water Well Ordinance.

#### **1. What is an Exploratory Well?**

An Exploratory Well is a water well used only for the limited purpose of determining the presence of sufficient potable water on parcels not verified as having been created in compliance with state and local laws. The use of Exploratory Wells began in the early 2000s to allow developers and potential purchasers of land to verify the presence of an adequate supply of groundwater prior making significant investments in their projects or purchases.

#### **2. What is the difference between an Exploratory Well and other types of domestic drinking water wells?**

Exploratory Wells are permitted and constructed exactly like domestic water wells. The difference is that permits for Exploratory Wells are issued without a legal lot determination or a determination of applicable regulations and restrictions that could prohibit or restrict the property's subsequent development, possibly impacting even the placement of the well itself.

#### **3. Are there special requirements and/or restrictions applying to Exploratory Wells that do not apply to other domestic drinking water wells?**

Yes. The requirements and restrictions that apply to Exploratory Wells, but not to other domestic drinking water wells, include the following:

- Property owners applying for Exploratory Wells will need to sign a **"Non-Development (Exploratory) Water Well Permit Disclaimer/Acknowledgment"** in which the property owner: (a) Agrees that the Exploratory Well will not be further developed or used for any purpose other than for determining the availability of an adequate water supply, and (b) Acknowledging that issuance of the Exploratory Well's Construction Permit will not convey an entitlement for any further development of the parcel.

Updated April 29, 2014

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## Exploratory Well Frequently Asked Questions

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- After the Exploratory Well has been drilled and availability of water has been determined, it will need to be capped and remain undeveloped (no pump, pressure tank, or electrical service) and unused in any way until the parcel is approved for development by the Departments of Public Works and Development Services.

#### 4. Why is there so much concern about legal lot determination in Butte County?

Prior to the 1972 revision of the State Subdivision Map Act, an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 parcels were created by deed in Butte County that did not conform to county standards at the time of parcel creation.

Issuance of development permits, such as septic, building, or well permits, allows parcels to further develop, even though the parcels might not have met county standards at the time of parcel creation. Inadvertently allowing parcels to develop in this manner can have negative implications for orderly and safe development, such as allowing residences to be constructed on parcels that do not have legal access.

To prevent development permits from being issued and thereby giving development rights to parcels that did not meet county standards at the time of parcel creation, the *Parcel Review* process was established in the 1980s and has been administered by the Butte County Public Works Department since 2005.

#### 5. What is the Parcel Review process?

The Parcel Review process is an interdepartmental review whereby the Department of Public Works establishes whether the parcel meets all state and local standards that were in place at the time of parcel creation and the Department of Development Services identifies any conditions or restrictions on the parcel that might affect future placement of improvements such as wells, septic systems, roads, and buildings.

#### 6. What happens to an Exploratory Well after legal lot determination?

When a parcel with an Exploratory Well is approved for development by the Departments of Public Works and Development Services, Environmental Health will re-designate the Exploratory Well as a domestic water well and the well can then be put to full use by the property owner.

#### 7. How can I get more information about Exploratory Wells and the Parcel Review process?

Exploratory Wells: For more information about Exploratory Wells, contact Environmental Health, located at 202 Mira Loma Drive, Oroville, CA, 95965, (530) 538-7281. In addition, the Water Well Ordinance (Butte County Code 23B) can be found on the Environmental Health website at this address: <http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth/environmental/environmental.html>

Parcel Review Process: For more information about the Parcel Review process, contact the Department of Public Works, located at 7 County Center Drive, Oroville, CA, 95965, (530) 538-7681 or the Department of Development Services, also located at 7 County Center Drive, (530) 538-7601.