

Central Coastal Plain Capacity Use Area Assessment Report Summary

November 2013

Introduction

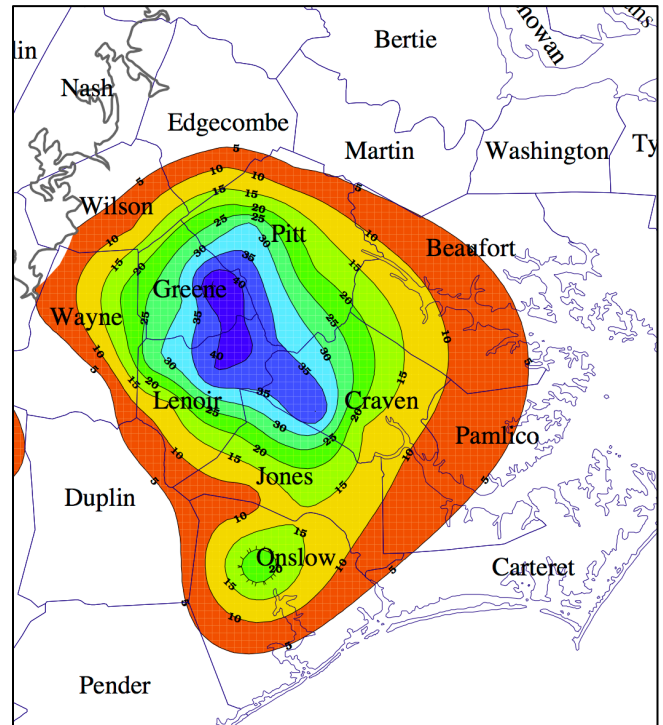
The Water Use Act (G.S. 143-215.11-22) and Central Coastal Plain Capacity Use Area (CCPCUA) rules (15A NCAC 2E .0501-.0507) regulate ground water withdrawals in a fifteen county region of the state. Rule 15A NCAC 2E .0503 describes a process where certain permit holders, who make use of the Cretaceous aquifers in three geographic zones, must limit withdrawals to a percentage of their Approved Base Rate (ABR) during three reduction phases. The three phases began on August 1, 2002 and will end July 31, 2018. An ABR was established for each permit holder based on historical use from either 1997 or August 1, 1999 – July 31, 2000.

Rule 15A NCAC 2E .0503 also requires the Division of Water Resources to assess the aquifer conditions at the end of each phase in 2008, 2013 and 2018 and report our findings and recommended changes to the reduction zones or percentages to the Environmental Management Commission (EMC). The assessment report is available on our web site as a PDF document.

Findings

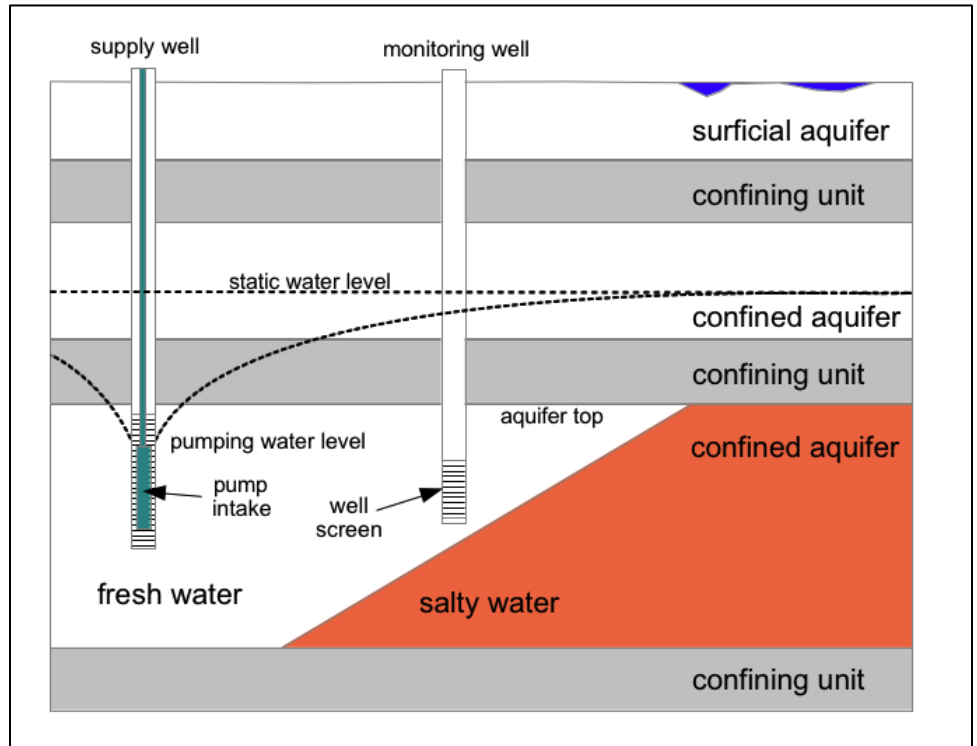
In our analysis of the CCPCUA we found significant areas of water level recovery leading to reduced concern about aquifer dewatering. However, salt water encroachment is still a difficult issue for several permit holders which will likely require continued reductions before a sustainable rate of withdrawal is achieved.

There are portions of the CCPCUA where water levels are relatively stable which led DWR to develop a more rigorous method of permit review beyond the prescribed phased reductions. The results are a new review process and the potential of a temporary permit with a stable withdrawal amount. To qualify for a temporary permit a water user must pass a set of four criteria and maintain those conditions or be removed from temporary permit status and put back on the reduction permit protocol.



Upper Cape Fear Aquifer Recovery Nov 2007 - May 2013

The requirements for temporary permits are 1. static water level trends must be level or upward trending after January 1, 2012, 2. pump intakes must be above the top of the shallowest Cretaceous aquifer screened by the well, 3. pumping water levels must be above the top of the shallowest Cretaceous aquifer screened by the well, and 4. where applicable, chloride concentrations must not show increases in salt water concentration.



Temporary Permit Criteria

Those users who obtain a stable withdrawal rate through a temporary permit will not be able to add credits to their Cretaceous water bank unless transferred from another user's bank. This differs from a reduction schedule permit holder who is allowed to credit their Cretaceous water bank with unused permitted water until July 31, 2018.

The EMC has agreed that both the Water Use Act and the CCPCUA rules allow the Division to issue temporary permits.

The adjustments to the water use permitting process described in the assessment report do not undo the reduction-based approach which forces investment in alternative, sustainable water sources while reducing reliance on the Cretaceous aquifers. These adjustments do allow DWR to perform individual permit holder analysis of aquifer conditions and give temporary relief from reductions. If monitoring reports reveal problems then DWR will re-open that permit and shift it back to a reduction schedule.