2026 Summary: Harney Basin Groundwater Level Trends

Overview

The Department measures and records groundwater levels across the Harney Basin to better understand long-term groundwater trends and provide water users with information that can help them understand current conditions and make informed decisions about their operations. This report includes updated data through spring 2026 and examines both total groundwater declines and the rate of change since 2020. The analysis is intended for informational purposes only and will not be used to implement Division 512 rules. Groundwater level trends will be updated annually after spring measurements are processed, and future reports will continue to use the same seven-subarea structure presented here.

Key Findings

- **Weaver Springs shows the largest long-term and recent groundwater declines.**
- **Dog Mountain and Northeast Crane also show meaningful, ongoing declines.**
- **Lower Blitzen-Voltage, Silver Creek, and Upper Blitzen show smaller average declines, but some wells decline more steeply.**
- **Silvies shows a positive average rate of change in recent years, although the total amount of decline is still negative.**
- **Groundwater conditions can vary widely within each subarea**.

Important Considerations

Groundwater level trends are influenced by climate variability, and while recent favorable water years may have contributed to some of the conditions reflected in this report, the 2026 snow drought could negatively affect groundwater levels in the future. Short-term increases in groundwater levels do not necessarily indicate long-term improvement, as weather-driven fluctuations can make underlying trends difficult to distinguish. In some subareas, the limited number of wells with sufficient data means that average trends may be less representative of overall conditions. Additionally, averages can mask significant variation among individual wells, some of which have experienced much larger declines than the area-wide average.

Previous Versions of the Analysis

** Analyses from 2023 and 2024 used a proposed 15-subarea framework.

The CGWA rules adopted last year established seven subareas, so this report uses those subareas. Earlier results cannot be directly compared.

Wells Excluded from the Analysis

Technical staff reviewed all wells for accuracy and data issues. Eleven wells were excluded due to unresolved concerns about measurement or reporting accuracy.