

Josephine County Land Division Policy Concerning Water Availability

Chapter 5 of the *Josephine County Rural Land Development Code (RLDC)* addresses “Land Divisions” and any application requirements, tentative plan requirements, conditions and improvements, and review criteria concerning the availability of water for development. Our earlier brochure covered specific standards and criteria for subdivisions, land partitions, replats, and planned unit developments.¹

Rural Residential The purpose section of the Rural Residential zones, *RLDC*, contains this statement: “Densities established by this zone for developing areas are intended to ensure that development does not exceed the carrying capacity of the land to support sewage disposal systems, consumptive groundwater withdrawal, and environmental quality.”

Water Standards The purpose of Article 84, Water Standards, *RLDC*, is to require prior testing and approval of development in order to reasonably

assure an adequate and safe water supply for all citizens of Josephine County. A related purpose is to determine the

availability, impact and water quality for the users of ground water in the county.

A major weakness of Article 84 is that for the most part it only applies to subdivisions and land partitions on lots less than 1 acre and then it is only applicable for a percentage of the new lots.

Water Availability

Water Availability There is no long-term ground water availability information for most aquifers in Josephine County, and thus it is difficult to impossible to determine how long the ground water resource will sustain present and future residential use. However, continued development dependent on groundwater will at some point in time cause groundwater use to exceed groundwater recharge for the aquifer. We *do* know with certainty that some aquifers are much more limited, and thus sensitive to increased water withdrawal, than others.



Carrying Capacity

Standard Carrying capacity standards for water availability are covered in the specific land division section of the *RLDC* and the definition which follows in part.

*“Section 11.030 — Carrying Capacity. The ability of land to support proposed development as determined by . . . the adequacy of the domestic groundwater supply (quantity and quality) . . .”*²

1. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society & Joe Creek Neighborhood Association. January 8, 2002. *What Is The Carrying Capacity Of Your Aquifer?* Brochure 1 in Aquifer Series. Grants Pass, OR.
2. Carrying capacity is defined in Article 11, page 1-10, *RLDC*.
3. Hugo Neighborhood. October 23, 2002. *Free Internet Information On Ground Water*. Grants Pass, OR.
4. Hugo Neighborhood. October 5, 2002. *Well Interference*. Grants Pass, OR.
5. Significant impact is defined in Article 11, page 1-36, *RLDC*.

Unknown Carrying Capacity and Impacts To Neighbors

Unknown Carrying Capacity When ground water is being mined, long-term ground water levels decline for a given aquifer when the ground water withdrawal rate exceeds the ground water recharge rate. As additional domestic (exempt) ground water users³ increase in a particular aquifer, it is likely that well interference⁴ complaints will increase, and the already over-appropriated surface water (stream flows) will continue to further decrease during the dry season months.

Recommendations We have serious concerns about the availability of ground water for development due to the unknown carrying capacity of the region to supply water for development and the unknown effects of development. Therefore, there is potential for significant cumulative adverse impacts⁵ to existing water users and land owners.

We recommend to Josephine County that all the discretionary standards and criteria for water availability listed in the *RLDC* be applicable to all land division applications in the county (including all new ground water users to conduct, at a minimum, a four-hour test, but perhaps 8 to 16 hour tests).

And, most important, all land use requests involving new wells should have a carrying capacity and significant impact analysis conducted - on an aquifer basis and site specific basis - for all new land divisions (all new lots).

Potential For Significant Adverse Impacts To Neighbors

Unknown Carrying Capacity

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

It's land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and by preserving, protecting, and enhancing the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Voluntary membership dues are \$10.00 annually and are due in January. They will be used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Make checks payable to the *Hugo Neighborhood* and send them our Treasurer. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

Hugo Neighborhood Association

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What Is The Carrying Capacity Of Your Aquifer?

Brochure 2 in Aquifer Series



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**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society**

Citizens For A Voice In Growth

Joe Creek Neighborhood Association

Quail Lane Neighborhood Association

Sexton Mountain Neighborhood Association

Three Pines Neighborhood Association