U.S. Department of Energy Nevada Site Office

EM NEWS FLASH

A Fresh Take on Groundwater at Amargosa Valley Open House

From drilling to sampling, groundwater was the topic on everyone's mind at a recent open house in Amargosa Valley, Nevada.

On September 18, 2012, residents of Beatty, Amargosa Valley, Pahrump and other neighboring communities gathered at the Amargosa Community Center for the *4th Annual Groundwater Open House*. The U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office conducts the annual open house to share updates on the extensive work being done to address groundwater contamination from historic underground nuclear tests at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS).

Attendees view the "ant-sized" hydrologic system demonstration, which was a centerpiece at the Drilling station.

This year's open house took a more hands-on approach than past years. Interactive stations on *Monitoring*, *Drilling*, *Sampling*, *Modeling*, *Protection* and *Communication* were set up throughout the venue. Stations featured colorful displays, handouts, and videos, as well as live demonstrations conducted by subject-matter experts.

And, based on participant responses, the new open house format was a rousing success!

"I benefited from this Groundwater Open House in Amargosa," said Colleen Scranton of Pahrump, NV. "The displays were placed strategically, and the people available to answer the questions were not only extremely knowledgeable, but willing to take the time demonstrating, and stopping to answer questions as they came up," she added. "They also pointed out many things that most would overlook or never think to ask."

A three-dimensional animation video was the main attraction at the Modeling station.

Drilling was one of the more popular stations with a hands-on interactive model of an "ant-sized" hydrologic system that demonstrated how groundwater, and any contamination introduced into it, moves beneath the surface.

Attendees also gravitated to the *Modeling* station which featured three-dimensional video graphics that animate how contaminants behave in groundwater that moves in the complex geologic subsurface of the NNSS.

"There was a lot of interest shown in the computer modeling technology we use in our groundwater drilling strategy," said Nevada Site Office Federal Activity Lead, Bill Wilborn. "Modeling is a critical part of the process as it is an important tool in helping us forecast potential contaminant flow paths."

Recent groundwater drilling activities were also highlighted with scientists fresh from the field discussing two model evaluation wells drilled in Frenchman Flat during August, as well as two groundwater characterization wells under construction in Pahute Mesa.

In addition to Nevada Site Office federal and contractor staff, other Open House participants included representatives from Nye County, the State of Nevada Divisions of Environmental Protection and Water Resources, U.S Geological Survey, Desert Research Institute, and Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board.

"Our goal for this year's Open House was to present information in a more interactive way. I think it was very successful!" said Nevada Site Office Federal Manager, Rob Boehlecke.

Visit www.nv.energy.gov/emprograms/groundwater.aspx to view some of the posters and exhibits displayed during Open House. Contact Environmental Management Public Involvement at envmgt@nv.doe.gov or 702-295-3521 if you would like additional information.

Did You Know...

The groundwater characterization team is composed of U.S. Department of Energy Nevada Site Office federal staff and a number of organizations, including:

Desert Research Institute, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory, National Security Technologies, Navarro-Intera, State of Nevada, U.S. Geological Survey

Groundwater characterization activities are conducted by these organizations in accordance with the Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order (FFACO), a legally-binding document agreed to by the State of Nevada, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the U.S. Department of Defense.