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Water Sampling Scheduled for SJRA Catahoula Test Well

The San Jacinto River Authority has completed the initial drilling activities for its Catahoula test well in The Woodlands and is in the process of working with hydrologists to finalize the water sampling plans for the well.

The well is located south of Woodlands Parkway and east of FM 2978 and was drilled to a depth of 4,010 feet, which reaches to the base of the Catahoula formation. At this location in the county, the Catahoula formation is almost 2,000 feet thick and contains multiple layers of clay and limited layers of sand. Potential water supplies are contained in the sand layers, so hydrologists are reviewing the data obtained from well logs completed last week to determine the best layers from which to take water samples for further analysis.

According to the initial well log results, the most productive sands appear to be in the lower parts of the Catahoula aquifer at depths ranging from approximately 3,200 to 3,800 feet. These sands are generally believed to be capable of producing less than a typical Jasper well production rate of 1,500 gallons per minute, but still an acceptable amount of production. Water samples will be taken in the next one to two weeks and then analyzed by independent labs to assess the water quality in the well.

Well logs also showed a thinner, less productive layer of sands at approximately 2,300 feet, which is right at the top of the Catahoula formation. These sands are estimated to have a lower production rate. Because of the spotty and thin nature of these sands, their longevity and reliability under sustained high rates of pumpage are questionable, but water samples will also be taken in these shallower sands to confirm the water quality in this zone.

In addition to salinity, there are numerous other parameters and water quality tests that must be performed to verify that the water meets various drinking water standards. The SJRA has contracted with the United States Geologic Survey to confirm lab results and to supplement and provide an additional layer of analysis to the standard water quality tests being performed on the water. Other interested parties have also been invited to participate in the sampling and share the data.

Mark Smith, the SJRA's GRP Administrator, noted: "This well is the furthest point south in Montgomery County where actual water samples will have been taken to date, so it is a valuable data point for Catahoula research, and we intend to share the results with all interested parties."

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