

## 2010 CANON ENVIROTHON CURRENT ISSUE SUMMARY

### “PROTECTION OF GROUNDWATER THROUGH URBAN, AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING”

Access to clean, safe drinking water is an essential ingredient to a healthy and viable community. Severe human health, ecological, and economic consequences would follow from losses of current and/or future drinking water sources—losses that can be prevented. The potential for contamination of drinking water, coupled with the high cost of treating water and locating and developing alternate water sources, makes it imperative that government entities adopt and implement effective strategies for long-term protection of drinking water sources. This is especially true for areas dependent on groundwater.

Many factors — including increasing populations and over-development - put stresses on groundwater supplies. While governmental planning agencies focus on land development, community economics, and encouraging a good jobs-per-housing ratio, planning for the protection of groundwater often receives scant attention regarding drought, contamination, planning for future economic growth, and encouraging water conservation by all users. Due to its nature, most communities have no clear understanding of how much groundwater is available. How do planners decide who has priority when allocating water supplies?

Efforts to monitor and characterize groundwater quantity and quality have typically been sporadic and, while successful in some local jurisdictions and watersheds, largely inadequate. More reliable, consistent, and comprehensive data are needed to sufficiently characterize groundwater quality and quantity in order to support critical water resource use, protection, and management decisions. Policy makers at all levels of government will be faced with crucial decisions regarding growth and development alternatives and tradeoffs.

What are the consequences of a lack of proper planning for protection of groundwater resources? Should urban users have priority over agriculture? Should agriculture have priority while restricting urban growth? Should environmental considerations — such as maintaining stream flow — have priority over both urban and agricultural uses? How can future threats to surface and groundwater resources be addressed?