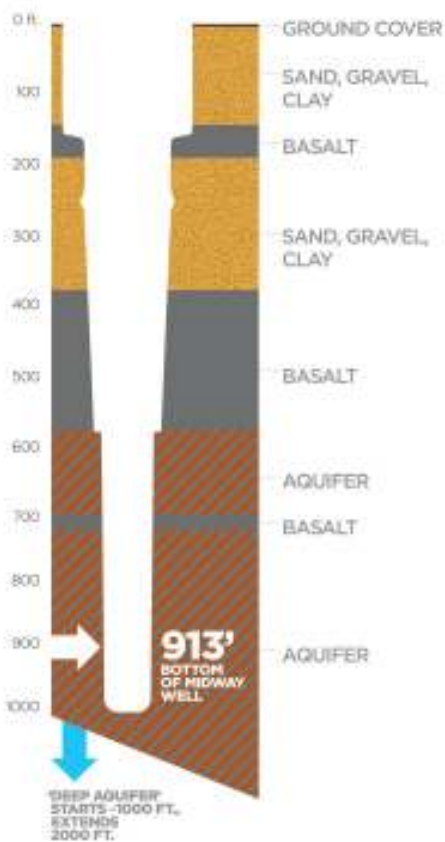


 THE TAOS NEWS

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 NEWS

Getting to the bottom of the Midway Well on U.S. 64



(/uploads/original/20190322-173229-Abeyta Midway Well full.jpg)

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Posted Friday, March 22, 2019 5:55 pm

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The March 21, 2019 edition of *The Taos News* contained several stories about water issues in the Taos Valley. Read the front-page story (<https://www.taosnews.com/stories/taos-water-protectors-protest-new-wells,55877>) about a four-day protest at a water well, an explainer of the Abeyta Settlement (<https://www.taosnews.com/stories/what-is-the-abeyta-settlement-where-is-that-well-why-should-i-care,55876>), a decision by an acequia in Arroyo Seco to cut ties (<https://www.taosnews.com/stories/arroyo-seco-acequia-ditches-taos-valley-association,55875>) with the valley-

wide acequia organization, and Taos County's decision to drop its protest (<https://www.taosnews.com/stories/taos-county-drops-protest-to-water-rights-transfer-for-aamodt-settlement,55878>) of a different but still controversial water rights settlement.

The Abeyta Settlement is a complex water-sharing agreement among the major water users in the Taos Valley, like the town of Taos, Taos Pueblo, acequias and El Prado Water and Sanitation District.

It was finalized in the federal courts in 2013 and, since 2017, the entities involved with the settlement have been applying for federal money to plan and drill the wells that are integral to pulling off the ideas written down in the settlement.

Due to compromises made during the settlement negotiations, the El Prado district must relocate some of its water pumping away from the Buffalo Pasture at Taos Pueblo.

The Midway well is one of the first settlement projects to see progress. The well was recently drilled to 913 feet, the bottom layer of the aquifer used by most people in Taos County. Other domestic wells within a mile of the site range in depth from about 400 feet to about 900 feet. The deeper aquifer, as El Prado's hydrologist describes it, starts about 65 feet below the lowest point of the Midway well.

The settlement gave the El Prado district two general areas to dig its wells, both on the north side of the highway and between the Taos Pueblo Tracts A and B.

Hydrologists have the leeway to pick the best spot in those areas. The Midway well is located on private land that - should the well prove successful - the district will officially purchase.

The first well El Prado attempted to dig was the Río Grande well. That well was supposed to be drilled deeper and located farther west than the Midway well. They drilled it down to about 1,800 feet, the deep aquifer.

But there wasn't much water and it was stuck in an ancient sand dune (think the Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado). Unlike aquifers in limestone formations elsewhere in the country, the aquifer under Taos is more complex: water moves between the natural gaps in the sand, clay and gravel (like pit run used by public works departments).

"That [deeper] aquifer is not being tapped at the present time," said El Prado's hydrologist Maryann Wasiolek. The district hasn't picked a new spot for the Río Grande well.