



Looking for a participatory scheme between public administrations and stakeholders: example of the Baix Penedès aquifers (Catalonia, Spain)

Blanca Torras and Alfredo Pérez-Paricio

Agència Catalana de l'Aigua, Concessions, Barcelona, Spain (btorras@gencat.cat)

The Catalan Agency of Water (l'Agència) is the institution that has full competences concerning the control, management and planning of water resources in approximately the Eastern half of the Catalan territory, in NE Spain. L'Agència determined the need to further characterise and assess the conceptual model of the aquifers included in the groundwater body (GWD) #21, called "Detrític neogen del Baix Penedès". One of the issues to face was to the fact that piezometric data were not consistent with the final state of risk defined for GWB 21, because the information used was not updated.

GWB 21 includes different layers of detritic and carbonated rocks, although the hydrological relationship between them are not well known. The first step was collecting information about wells, extractions, geology (lithological logs), pumping regimes, and all that can be implemented in a conceptual model. Completing this first step required treating with stakeholders, consisting mostly of local administrations, farmers and industries present within the working area. These contacts served the l'Agència not only to improve the characterisation of GXB 21, but also to explain the goals of the work to the aquifer users and to get them involved.

But one of the most remarkable and fruitful experiences took place when the town council of Banyeres del Penedès organised a public meeting about the main aquifer of GWB 21, known as "Sorres de Santa Oliva" in order to close the gap between scientific aspects and social awareness. The meeting gathered together representatives of private enterprises, the university and water administrations, and participating in the sessions was really enriching for the audience, since people could understand technical processes and management problems that usually seem to be hidden. Furthermore, it was an opportunity for the speakers to get to know each other, to discuss and share knowledge of the hydrogeology and management of GWB 21, and of course to identify what inhabitants concern about.

At present, l'Agència has finished a groundwater numerical model for the aquifers included in GWB 21. One of the next steps will consist of explaining the results to local councils and the inhabitants of the area. Completing the model has required the contribution of stakeholders and particularly the help of a university representative (prof. Vaquer). So now l'Agència has the opportunity of explain them the results achieved and to involve them in the stage of taking management decisions.

In sum, the relationship among different administrations, the university and the stakeholders may strengthen the choices and actions to be carried out in a certain territory. It makes the work easier since the different actors share a common objective: taking the most efficient decisions to improve groundwater management and water availability for environmental needs and users.

Key words: administration, aquifer, groundwater management, stakeholders