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Aerial mapping of aquifers postponed

A scientific project to map Tairāwhiti aquifers from the air has been postponed until next summer.

Aqua Intel Aotearoa Programme Director Jane Frances says “Cyclone Gabrielle has been devastating for the people of the region, and our thoughts are with all those affected. We don’t want to get in the way of critical response and recovery work so we are postponing the aerial survey.”

The aquifer mapping involves a helicopter flying over Poverty Bay flats and areas in the north of the region. The survey uses the latest airborne electromagnetic technology (AEM) which scans down to about 300 metres underground. The survey was planned to take place in February but had not begun before Cyclone Gabrielle hit.

Jane Frances says the mapping would provide information about underground water resources including aquifer depth, extent, geology and seawater interface in Poverty Bay, Wharekahika (Hicks Bay), Te Araroa, Waiapu and Tolaga Bay.

“This project is intended to help everyone understand more about what water is available in this region to meet everyone’s day-to-day needs, and support jobs and income. The information the project will provide about the region’s groundwater will continue to be important for long term planning, and the protection of water. This information may also help the region’s resilience to extreme events in the future through, for example, identifying potential sources of drinking water.

“We will now plan towards gathering this information next summer.”

The project is funded by Aqua Intel Aotearoa (a partnership between GNS Science and Kānoa, funded by the Provincial Growth Fund) and Gisborne District Council. It has been planned in discussion with Te Runanganui o Ngāti Porou, Tāmanuhiri Tūtū Poroporo Trust, Te Aitanga a Māhaki Trust and Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust.

Aqua Intel Aotearoa has taken advice from people in Tairāwhiti about rescheduling the project.

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