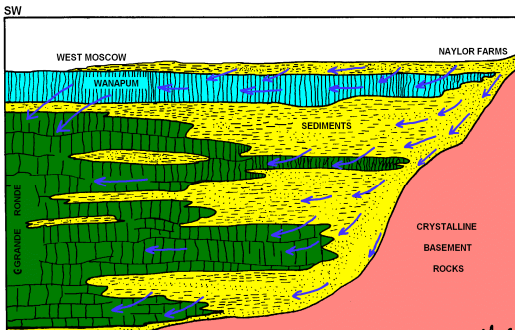
Moscow Area Aquifers

The majority of our water source in the greater Moscow area comes from two basalt aquifer systems – the Wanapum and Grande Ronde (Ralston, 2004). The Wanapum is the shallow, upper aquifer found just 60 feet below the surface, while the Grande Ronde is the deep, lower aquifer found 300 feet below the surface. In the 1999 Annual Report for the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee, McKenna (2000) states that the basalt formations that make up the Grande Ronde and Wanapum aquifers contain many pores, formed by trapped air in the cooling basalt lava during volcanic activity, which allow the formations to hold groundwater. She explains the aquifer formation further by stating "sedimentary layers are interbedded with the basalt flows, representing periods of minimum volcanic activity when sediments were deposited by lakes and rivers and soils were formed on the tops of the basalt flows."



The Grande Ronde and Wanapum aquifers extend and supply water to the city of Moscow, Idaho, as well as the cities of Pullman, Palouse and Colfax, Washington. According to Larry Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee, "there is little doubt now that the boundary is at least as big as the outer boundary shown."