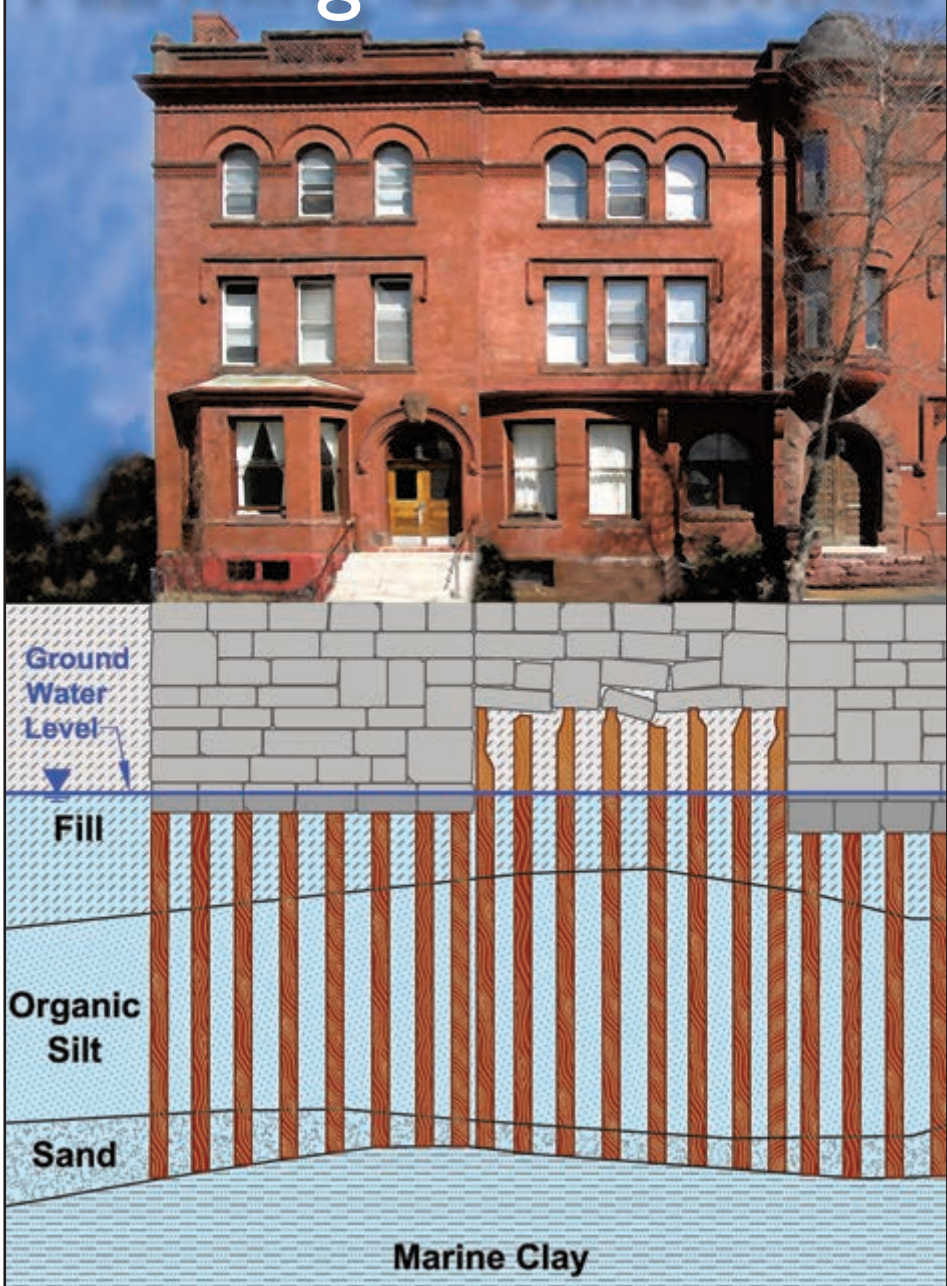


Lack of Snow Is Not Harming Groundwater



by Caitlin Russell

Although Boston hasn't seen much snow this year, rainfall has made up for it, and the Boston Groundwater Trust says the level of precipitation has been steady, and groundwater levels have remained normal.

As the City of Boston was being developed, timber was used to shore up buildings that sat on shifting silt, a result of Boston's foundation atop unstable wetlands. Underneath the wood holding up about 6,000 buildings in Boston is the city's groundwater supply, which can fluctuate from year to year depending on how much rain and snowfall the city sees.

According to Christian Simonelli,

Executive Director of the Boston Groundwater Trust, it's too soon to know for sure if the lack of snowfall has affected the groundwater in Boston, but says things are looking positive.

"Despite the fact that little snow has fallen, Boston was well above for precipitation in 2018. Overall the year was very positive for groundwater levels. We just started well readings for 2019 and so far have not seen anything out of the ordinary. Perhaps worth revisiting sometime in the Spring after we've completed a couple of reading sets."

According to the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the average rainfall in Boston

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Groundwater

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during 2018 was 51.78 inches, compared to an average of 32.57 in 2017 and 30.48 in 2016.

The decline of the city's water

tables has caused the timber piles beneath buildings' foundations to deteriorate, especially in the Back Bay. When groundwater declines, the timber is left exposed to the air, which can cause it to rot.

Over the years, manmade alterations to the city have shifted the flow of storm water that would

recharge the city's groundwater and continue to hold up the timber piles beneath the buildings.

In 2006 the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District was created to preserve Boston's groundwater levels and to "protect and enhance the city's historic neighborhoods and structures,

and otherwise conserve the value of its land and buildings; reduce surface water runoff and water pollution; and maintain public safety."

This law requires developers to meet certain standards if they wish to build in the overlay district. They must demonstrate

to the Zoning Board of Appeals that the planned development conforms with the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District law, and must install a groundwater collection and recharge system for any development covered by the zoning law.