

WELLINGTON Source Water PROTECTION

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FACT SHEET 4 AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and source water protection

Drinking water sources or source water includes untreated water from ground water, streams or lakes. This water is used to supply both private wells and municipal drinking water systems.

Water quality threats from agricultural activities

Agricultural operations can have an impact on both surface water sources and groundwater. Fertilizers, pesticides, manure and nutrients can be washed into surface water bodies or leach into groundwater posing a risk to drinking water sources. As a result, these activities are regulated under the Clean Water Act.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you own farmland and rent it out for production you should work with your tenant to ensure that best management practices for source water protection are being followed.

For more information about how to determine whether activities on your farm or property may impact drinking water, contact the local Risk Management Official who can meet with you and your tenant.



Potential causes of contamination

- Manure application and storage
- Fertilizer application runoff
- Lack of buffer zones (vegetation, trees) that separate working fields from water courses
- Improper pesticide storage, application or handling
- Poorly maintained septic systems
- Abandoned wells provide gateways for contaminants to enter surface or groundwater
- Fuel tank leaks or spills

Ontario farmers protect source water

Ontario farmers have demonstrated a longstanding commitment to farm

practices that help to maintain, protect, or improve water quality. Through best management practices (BMP's) such as grassed waterways, livestock fencing, stream buffer strips, and appropriate nutrient management, farmers are helping to protect water quality.

The Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition (OFEC) has developed a framework modeled after the Environmental Farm Plan Program, which will assist the farm community in assessing farm practices that would help maintain, improve or protect water quality within highly vulnerable areas. This tool will aid farmers affected by the Clean Water Act and Source Protection Plans in the negotiation and implementation of a Risk Management Plans. More information can be found at the OFA website.

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Managing risk on your property

Farms near municipal wells or in other highly vulnerable areas need special attention when it comes to protecting source water.

If your farm falls within vulnerable **Wellhead Protection Areas or Intake Protection Zone**, you may need to review and update your current regulatory approvals such as Nutrient Management Strategies/Plans. If you do not have a Nutrient Management Strategy / Plan, then landowners in these areas may be contacted by the Risk Management Official to complete a risk management plan.

For prohibitions or risk management plans to apply under the Clean Water Act, a threat activity must be deemed significant as per the provincial Table of Drinking Water Threats. Briefly, this means an activity must meet a certain threshold for prohibition or risk management plans to apply. For example, commercial fertilizer storage must be greater than 2500 kilograms and

must be located in the most vulnerable municipal Wellhead Protection Areas or Intake Protection Zones (score of 10 or certain issues contributing areas). For more information, please visit www.wellingtonwater.ca.

Prohibition

Prohibition is a tool introduced by the Clean Water Act that allows the Source Protection Committee to prohibit certain activities (including existing activities) that may become significant threats to source water protection. Municipalities will be responsible for enforcing these prohibitions through their Risk Management Official. The use of prohibition varies between the Source Protection Plans in Wellington County, however, manure application is often prohibited within 100 metres of a municipal well.

Risk management plan

A risk management plan is another tool introduced by the Clean Water Act that requires an agreement be reached between a Risk Management Official (RMO) and the person engaged in the

threat activity. This agreement creates a plan to manage the risk activity and is negotiated unless agreement cannot be reached. Once a plan is agreed to or established, these plans are legally binding.

Contents of the plan may include the responsibilities and protocols of the person engaged in the activity or landowner/tenant/operator to ensure that the activity does not become a significant threat. Municipalities will be responsible for enforcing these risk management plans through their Risk Management Official.

To find out if your farm falls within a vulnerable area like a wellhead capture zone, visit www.wellingtonwater.ca or to get in touch with your source protection Risk Management Official.

For more information:

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Website: www.wellingtonwater.ca

Or your local municipal office.

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