

YOUR WATER WELL!

Use it, maintain it or abandon it

When it comes to wells the best policy is “use it, maintain it, or abandon it”. Why? Because an old, unused or improperly maintained well can be a direct path for contaminants to reach your source of drinking water or your neighbours’.

In eastern Ontario, we have many unused wells dotting the countryside. These old wells are a threat to our health and safety. Besides the risk to our drinking water supply and groundwater, unused wells also pose a physical hazard to people and animals.

Well water protection begins at home. Old wells must be properly abandoned; plugged and sealed in a process called decommissioning. Just filling the well with debris or stones does not create a proper seal and will not prevent the flow of contaminated runoff or surface water into the well and from there into our groundwater supplies.

In fact, in Ontario, wells that are not used or maintained for future use, are legally required by the Ministry of the Environment to be decommissioned by the well owner. So, if you have an old well on your property that won’t be used again, you must have it properly sealed as soon as possible. If you have a well that you’re not using now, but might use in the future, you must maintain it like any other working well. Protecting our groundwater is everyone’s responsibility.

Each well and its surroundings are unique. A licensed well contractor will know the proper method of decommissioning your old well. Work on wells in Ontario must be carried out by a licensed well technician/well contractor licensed under the Ontario Water Resources Act.

There are many excellent sources of information available about wells. For information on best practices for protecting your well visit www.wellwise.ca or the Ontario Groundwater Association at www.ogwa.ca.

Grants are available to assist landowners located near sources of municipal drinking water with the cost of well decommissioning. To find out about these grants or to learn more about wells and groundwater protection efforts in your area, visit your local source protection group.

LINKS

Cataraqui Source Protection Area — www.cataraquiregion.on.ca

Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Region — www.mrsourcewater.ca

Quinte Source Protection Region — www.quintesourcewater.ca