What is a significant groundwater recharge area?

The land area where the rain or snow seeps down into an aquifer is called a recharge area.

An aquifer is an area of soil or rock under the ground that has many cracks and spaces and has the ability to store water. Water that seeps into an aquifer is called recharge. Much of the natural recharge of an aquifer comes from rain and melting snow.

Recharge areas often have loose or permeable soil, such as sand or gravel, which allows the water to seep easily into the ground. Areas with shallow fractured bedrock are also often recharge areas.

A recharge area is considered significant when it helps maintain the water level in an aquifer that supplies a community with drinking water.

A significant groundwater recharge area (SGRA) is one of four types of vulnerable areas identified in the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006*.

The four types of vulnerable areas in the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006* are:

- Significant groundwater recharge area
- Highly vulnerable aquifer
- Intake protection zone (for surface-water sources of drinking water such as a Great Lake or large river).
- Wellhead protection area (a zone of protection around a municipal well).

Policies in local source protection plans, for the Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield source protection areas, that apply to significant groundwater recharge areas, rely on education and outreach to reduce risk to drinking water sources.

The policies in those areas are recommendations only as they do not have legal effect that requires property owners to comply. However, municipalities, implementing bodies, and people in the region should have regard for these policies.

We can all play a role in keeping drinking water sources safe.

How can I help to protect drinking water in SGRAs?

Studies have shown it costs much less to protect water than it does to clean it up.

If you are in a significant groundwater recharge area, then you are in a vulnerable area.

Everything that goes onto the ground or through your septic system could affect water.

Have your septic system inspected and pumped every three to five years.

Don't dump these things on the ground, down the sink, or in the toilet:

Paints; thinners; furniture strippers
Coolants, cleaners
Glues, adhesives
Gasoline; oil; diesel; heating fuel
Degreasers; resins; creosote

Dispose of these and other chemicals at hazardous waste days or approved sites.

Here are more ideas on how to protect water:

- Use non-toxic products for cleaning and environmentally-friendly soaps, shampoos and personal care products. What you use in your house goes back down your drain.
- Take care when changing engine oil. One litre of gas or oil can contaminate a million litres of groundwater, it is said.
- Detect and repair leaks in the pipes, toilets, and taps around your home.

Visit **sourcewaterinfo.on.ca** for more ideas.

Protection of water at the source adds protection and reduces risk to human health. Thanks for doing all you can to protect your local sources of municipal drinking water.

DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION
ACT FOR CLEAN WATER

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Drinking Water Source Protection Region
c/o 71108 Morrison Line, RR 3 Exeter, ON • N0M 1S5 • 1–888–286–2610 • sourcewaterinfo.on.ca
Maitland Valley Source Protection Area: 519-335-3557 • Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Area: 519-235-2610

This project has received funding support from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. Such support does not indicate endorsement by the Ministry of the contents of the material.