

What are activities that can pose threats to drinking water sources?

A drinking water threat is an activity (such as storing heating oil at your home or having a septic system) or condition that adversely affects, or has the potential to adversely affect, the quality or quantity of any water that is or may be used as a source of drinking water. (Sources of drinking water in the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region include surface water from Lake Huron and groundwater – water that is underground in aquifers and that is drawn up through municipal wells).

Here are the 21 activities or conditions which could threaten municipal drinking water sources:

Provincially Prescribed Drinking Water Threats:

1. The establishment, operation or maintenance of a waste disposal site
2. The establishment, operation or maintenance of a system that collects, stores, transmits, treats or disposes of sewage (This includes septic systems)
3. The application of agricultural source material to land
4. The storage of agricultural source material
5. The management of agricultural source material
6. The application of non-agricultural source material to land
7. The handling and storage of non-agricultural source material
8. The application of commercial fertilizer to land
9. The handling and storage of commercial fertilizer
10. The application of pesticide to land
11. The handling and storage of pesticide
12. The application of road salt
13. The handling and storage of road salt
14. The storage of snow
15. The handling and storage of fuel
16. The handling and storage of a dense non-aqueous phase liquid (DNAPL)
17. The handling and storage of an organic solvent
18. The management of runoff that contains chemicals used in the de-icing of aircraft
19. An activity that takes water from an aquifer or a surface water body without returning the water taken to the same aquifer or surface water body
20. An activity that reduces the recharge of an aquifer
21. The use of land as livestock grazing or pasturing land, an outdoor confinement area or a farm-animal yard

Contact us

The level of threat to drinking water sources posed by the above activities or conditions is assessed as significant, moderate, or low. The level of risk depends upon factors such as the vulnerability of the land, how close the activity is to the municipal well, and the circumstances in which the activity is taking place. For instance, if the threat activity is storage of home heating oil, is the oil stored above-ground or below-ground in a basement ... and what are the quantities stored?

If you would like to know if your activity is assessed as a significant threat to drinking water, and whether source protection plan policies apply to your activity, please contact your local source protection region staff or municipal risk management official. Our contact information is below. Thanks for helping to protect water in Lake Huron and local wells.

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Ausable Bayfield
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What is a prescribed instrument?

One effective way to regulate an activity, in order to protect public health, is to use a prescribed instrument.

Under the *Clean Water Act, 2006* in Ontario, an instrument is any document of legal effect, including a permit, licence, approval, authorization, direction or order created under Ontario legislation.

When an instrument is provincially “prescribed,” it is specified in a regulation. Instruments, in this case, are documents that manage; approve or prohibit; permit; licence; or direct, order, or authorize activities to be completed or to be stopped.

A provincially prescribed instrument is one of the tools that can help to reduce threats to your drinking water.

Here are some examples of provincially prescribed instruments:

- Environmental Compliance Approvals (formerly Certificates of Approval)
- Pesticide Permits
- Permits to Take Water
- Nutrient Management Strategies
- Nutrient Management Plans
- Aggregate licences
- Renewable Energy Approvals
- Approvals of municipal official plans
- Orders to clean up soil or groundwater contamination
- Sewage and waste
- Municipal Drinking Water Licence
- Drinking Water Works Permit
- Aggregate Resources Act Instruments

Here are some examples of laws with regulations prescribing instruments:

- Pesticides Act
- Nutrient Management Act, 2002
- Aggregate Resources Act
- Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act
- Mining Act
- Environmental Protection Act
- Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994
- Ontario Water Resources Act

Some instruments may be used by municipalities or federal governments, as well. For example:

- Municipal government – e.g., business licences, building permits
- Federal government – e.g., authorization to establish/operate a nuclear facility, authorization for works or undertakings affecting fish habitat, licence/permit for storage/transportation of explosives

Instruments may be prescribed for the purposes of the *Clean Water Act, 2006*, so they can be used to implement policies in a source protection plan and manage threats to sources of municipal drinking water.

Many threats to drinking water sources are already regulated through provincial instruments. There are many instruments established in legislation but only a limited number of instruments are prescribed to the *Clean Water Act, 2006* for implementation of policies in locally-developed source protection plans.

It is common for site-specific instruments to include additional terms and conditions that establish requirements not listed in the legislation. For example, Environmental Compliance Approval for waste disposal sites (landfill sites) often require monitoring of groundwater and/or surface water quality at specified locations around the landfill site. This type of requirement is not stipulated in the broader legislation. Instead, these types of requirements are left to be addressed by the site-specific instrument. This allows the monitoring program to be customized to fit the needs of the particular landfill site.

For more information, visit ontario.ca for legislation, regulations, and prescribed instruments overview bulletin.

You may also be interested in your local source protection committee's *Explanatory Document* explaining when and why prescribed instruments were used to address threats to drinking water sources. This is available online at sourcewaterinfo.on.ca.

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This project has received funding support from the Government of Ontario.
Such support does not indicate endorsement of the contents of this material.