



Drinking Water Source Protection: Buying Property in a Vulnerable Area

This resource is for potential buyers of residential, agricultural or commercial/industrial properties that may be in a vulnerable area – that is, close to a source of municipal drinking water.

If the property you are interested in is located in a vulnerable area, certain activities may need to be managed or are prohibited to help ensure that your local sources of municipal drinking water remain protected. This factsheet provides information on source protection for drinking water and suggests steps to find out how your plans for the property may be subject to policies under your local source protection plan.

What is drinking water source protection?

We all rely on safe, sustainable drinking water. While municipal drinking water in Ontario is considered safe and reliable, it's important to consider the source of the water that comes into your municipality's treatment plants. Protecting the water at its source is an important first step in Ontario's drinking water safety net.

The Ontario government established the Drinking Water Source Protection Program under the *Clean Water Act* in 2006. This program protects our sources of municipal drinking water (lakes, rivers and aquifers) from contamination and overuse. Local source protection plans contain policies to protect these sources of municipal drinking water.

What is a vulnerable area?

Drinking water source protection is based on science. Policies in the local plans apply to specific, mapped areas that identify where sources of municipal drinking water are vulnerable to contamination or overuse. In these areas, we need to pay attention to activities that may pose a risk to our sources of drinking water now and in the future.

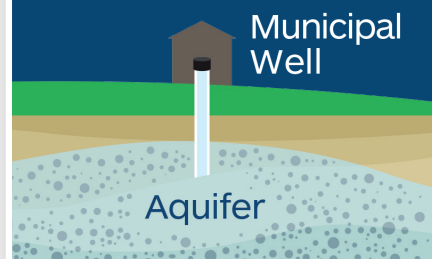
How does this impact me?

If the property you are interested in is located in a vulnerable area, there may be certain activities that are restricted or prohibited. You should be aware of the requirements under the *Clean Water Act*, and local source protection plan policies that may apply before you buy.



What is an aquifer?

Aquifers are water-bearing layers of sand, gravel and rock.



In some cases, policies require a risk management official from a municipality or conservation authority to work with landowners/renters to develop a risk management plan. This is a legally-binding agreement that documents what measures are already in place and what needs to be added so that the risks posed by certain activities are reduced.

Note: There may already be a risk management plan in place. However, the plan won't transfer with the property, as it's based on the person undertaking the activities.

Suggested next steps:

- **Look up the property location**, and see what local source protection plan policies apply, if any. Search the Source Protection Information Atlas (SPIA) from the Government of Ontario at ontario.ca/page/source-protection.
- **If you are proposing any new use, business or construction on the property**, follow up with your local municipality to see if and how local source protection policies may impact your future plans for the property.
- **Contact your local source protection region or area** to speak with someone who can answer your specific questions, and provide you with more information. For a list of local contacts and resources search "source protection plans and resources" at conservationontario.ca.

This fact sheet should **NOT** be considered legal advice.

About septic systems

If there's a septic system on the property: The Ontario Building Code requires that septic systems in certain vulnerable areas surrounding municipal drinking water sources be inspected every five years. Check your municipal requirements.



For more information contact:

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Drinking Water Source Protection Region
c/o Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, 71108 Morrison Line, RR 3 Exeter, Ontario N0M 1S5

www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca

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