

Significant Threats to Drinking Water...



What does this mean?

Your municipality relies on either groundwater wells or surface water to supply drinking water to you and/or your neighbours. To protect the health of the people in your community, it is important to protect this water from becoming polluted.

Drinking water protection starts with protecting the land and water nearest to the well or surface water intake. Pollutants spilled, dumped or leaked in these areas can make their way into the municipal system threatening the quality of drinking water. Technical studies are being done to learn what areas and what activities on the land or water may pose a potential threat to the quality of the water.

What are drinking water threats?

Drinking water threats are activities (or conditions from past activities) that have the potential to pose a risk to the quality of water that is or may be used as a source of drinking water.

Through the source protection process outlined in the *Clean Water Act*, activities that pose risks to drinking water undergo a technical assessment and are ranked based on their level of threat. Drinking water threats are classified as significant, moderate or low based on a 'Water Quality Risk Assessment'. Through the assessment, how vulnerable the source of drinking water is to contamination and the level of risk posed by the activity is determined.



The Province has identified a list of activities that can be considered drinking water quality threats:

- **waste disposal sites** - establishment, operation, maintenance
- **sewage systems** (including septic) - establishment, operation, maintenance
- **agricultural & non-agricultural source material** - application, storage, management/handling
- **commercial fertilizer/pesticides** - application, storage, handling
- **road salt** - application, storage, handling
- **snow** - storage
- **fuel** - handling, storage
- **dense non-aqueous phase liquid (DNAPL)** - handling, storage
- **organic solvents** - handling, storage
- **chemicals used in the de-icing of aircraft** - management of runoff
- **livestock grazing, pasturing, outdoor confinement areas, farm-animal yards** - use of land

Significant Threats

There are many potential threats to drinking water in our urban and rural areas. The level of risk they pose depends on the nature of the threat and its location. Under the *Clean Water Act*, activities that pose the greatest risk to drinking water must be minimized or eliminated. These activities are called significant threats.



How did my property get identified?

Researchers working for conservation authorities or municipalities have used a variety of means to identify the possible location of potential threats. They have examined documents such as publicly available industrial databases, aerial photography and windshield surveys. In some cases, they have obtained information directly from property owners. They also may have made some assumptions (e.g. a rural home would have a septic system).

The location of properties containing potential significant threats will not be identified in the Assessment Report. The report will only identify the number and type of potential threats within wellhead and intake protection areas.

Individual property owners will be notified if it is believed their land is the site of a potential significant threat. If you have received a letter and the information about significant threats is incorrect, please contact us to have your property re-assessed.

How will this affect me?

Activities that are ranked as significant threats to drinking water will require action to minimize or eliminate the threat as outlined in a source protection plan. The Source Protection Plan, to be developed by August 2012, will set out mandatory policies for addressing significant threats. Acceptable risk management measures regarding some activities may already be in place or easily implemented.

Policy options to address significant threats may include:

- Changes to municipal land use policies
- Amendments to Provincial Instruments (e.g. Certificates of Approval, pesticide permits) to incorporate best management practices
- Stewardship, outreach and incentive programs
- Risk management plans
- Restricted land uses/prohibition

There are actions that property owners can take now to decrease the risk that an activity on their lands could pollute a drinking water source (e.g. septic system upgrade, well decommissioning, etc.).

For more information on grants for landowners, contact your local Conservation Authority or see the Stewardship Link at www.trentsourceprotection.on.ca.



How can I get involved?

The identification of significant threats was done using the best available data and by talking to landowners. If your property has been identified as a location where a significant threat is being carried out, and this is **not** the case, please contact us or complete a "Drinking Water Threat - Comment Form" available at www.trentsourceprotection.ca. If applicable, we can update our information and remove your property from the list!

The source protection planning process is open and public. Contact your local Conservation Authority, check our website or sign up for our e-news bulletins to find out about public consultation opportunities.

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