

# **CARING FOR YOUR WATER WELL**

*The District of Highlands Groundwater Task Force has created this quick reference and information sheet for all Highlanders to raise awareness for protecting our water supply.*

Each year you will receive this information sheet with your property tax notice as a reminder to protect and care for your drinking water supply.

## **WHERE DOES MY DRINKING WATER COME FROM?**

Your drinking water comes to your home from a water well on your property, or in some cases from surface water. It is in limited supply. Depending on the depth of your water well you may share your water supply with one or more of your neighbour(s). This means that the quantity of water available for your use is not only dependent on how well you conserve your water use, but also how well your neighbours do.

## **HOW DOES GROUNDWATER GET CONTAMINATED?**

Groundwater contamination typically results from poor land use practices.

In rural areas the most common sources of groundwater contamination are malfunctioning septic systems, over use of pesticides and herbicides, and poor storage of fuels or chemicals such as gasoline, heating fuel or paints.

Flooding can also contaminate a water well or cistern.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY WATER SUPPLY?**

Good yard management is the best way to protect your water supply. Here are some key suggestions:

- empty your septic tank at least every other year
- have your septic field tested to ensure its integrity
- consider disinfecting your water well once a year if you do not have pre-existing water treatment in place such as ultraviolet (UV) or in-stream chlorination. A water softener does NOT disinfect your water supply.
- do not store any uncovered or unsealed containers of gasoline, oil, paints, or other chemical substances in uncovered areas on your property
- avoid using any chemicals to enhance your lawn or garden, these can get into your groundwater supply relatively quickly
- ensure proper wellhead protection by making sure the surface of your well is adequately sealed, covered and locked to prevent any accidental release of substances directly into your well water
- clearly label and protect your wellhead
- decommission and properly seal the surface (at least the top one to two meters) of any water well not in use on your land

## **WHAT WATER QUALITY TESTING SHOULD I DO FOR MY DRINKING WATER?**

You should test your water in your household taps (choose more than one) at least once a year primarily for coliforms (bacteria) and once every few years for metals (many wells in the Highlands are high in iron and manganese). Local testing laboratories in the Greater Victoria area can help you with this. It is a relatively inexpensive way to ensure your family's health.

**If you have any questions about your drinking water, please contact the Environmental Health Officer at your local public health office (phone 250-475-1858). Here is a web link to general information regarding wells:**

<http://www.hls.gov.bc.ca/protect/index.html>