

Stepping Into Wellhead Protection

By Mike Stanzel, Source Water Protection Specialist

Nebraska Wellhead Protection is a voluntary program developed to prevent groundwater contamination from entering public water supply wells. Groundwater contamination can cause your drinking water to be unsafe for consumption and your public water wells unusable.

The Wellhead Protection process includes identifying the land surrounding the public water supply wells to be protected, identifying potential sources of ground water contamination within this area, managing the potential contaminant sources, developing emergency and contingency plans for the community water supply and educating and involving the public.

Groundwater can be vulnerable to contamination. Various land use, commercial and industrial activities can affect the quality of groundwater. Landfills; pesticides and fertilizers: above and below ground storage tanks containing gasoline; oil or chemicals: onsite waste and wastewater systems for humans and animals: and hazardous waste dump sites are all examples of potential contaminant sources.

Taking action through management can prevent or reduce the risk of a potential contaminant from entering your groundwater supply.

These practices can be implemented in commercial, industrial, urban, and rural settings, Examples include installing buffer strips, practicing crop rotation, decommissioning abandoned wells, installing water meters and backflow devices, storing and handling commercial and industrial chemicals properly, cleaning up hazardous waste and junk sites, no-till farming, managing nutrient and water applications in rural and urban areas, and adopting wellhead ordinances for your community.

Success cannot be achieved without the support of community leaders, community members and surrounding business and land owners.

These plans will work if everyone is willing to come together and do their part.

Please let me know if you would like assistance in developing or educating your community on wellhead protection.