



Source Water Protection and agriculture

Oxford County is wholly reliant on groundwater as its source for drinking water. Groundwater comes from underground aquifers which supply water to both private wells and municipal drinking water systems.



Water quality threats from agricultural activities

Agricultural operations can have an impact on groundwater. Fertilizers, manure, pesticides, fuel and other chemicals can leach into groundwater posing a risk to drinking water sources. As a result, related activities are regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Potential causes of contamination



- Manure application and storage
- Fertilizer application
- Improper pes wells provide pathways for application



- Poorly maintained septic systems
- Fuel tank leaks or spills



- Abandoned wells provide pathways for containinants



Ontario farmers protecting source water

Ontario farmers have demonstrated a commitment to farm practices that minimize the impacts of agricultural practices on water quality. Best management practices (BMPs), such as nutrient management planning, livestock fencing, and spills management, are already in use on many farms. Additionally many farmers are familiar with the Environmental Farm Plan process.



Managing risk on your farm

Farms near municipal wells and in vulnerable areas need special attention when it comes to protecting source water. There are four ways that the Clean Water Act manages agricultural activities within these vulnerable areas:

Nutrient Management Act

You may need to review and update your current regulatory approvals such as a Nutrient Management Plan or Strategy.

Prohibition

Manure application within 100m of a municipal well is prohibited. There are also new restrictions on where new storage facilities can be constructed within a Wellhead Protection Area.

Risk Management Plans

A risk management plan is a negotiated agreement between a County Risk Management Official (RMO) and the person (landowner/tenant/farmer) engaged in the activity. It is based on the principles of the Nutrient Management Act and includes BMPs to manage the risks associated with certain activities.

Septic Re-Inspection Program

Property owners may be required to have their septic systems inspected every five years to ensure the system is functioning properly. This program was established by the Ontario Building Code and is enforced by Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services staff.

For more information:

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