

Wellhead Protection Plan for the City of Harris

In March, 2014, the Minnesota Department of Health approved the Wellhead Protection Plan Amendment for the City of Harris. This plan has been prepared in conjunction with several local, county and state agencies and provides an assessment of the city's source waters and contains goals, objectives and action strategies for the potential sources covered by the plan.

As part of the Wellhead Protection Plan process, we identified the Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) and assessed the vulnerability of our water supply. We also documented measures to help protect the city's water supply from potential sources of contamination.

The City of Harris relies on groundwater for its drinking water supply. The City owns and operates wells that draw water from groundwater aquifers located several hundred feet underground. Groundwater aquifers are vulnerable to contamination from human land surface activities. Protection of our water supply means preventing contamination within the area that supplies water to the city's wells. This effort is all about providing a safe water supply to residents and to proactively protect human health for all those with wells within the protection area.

One of the most effective contamination protection initiatives includes the identification and sealing of unused wells that are located within the wellhead protection area.

An unused, unsealed well can provide an open channel between the land surface and an aquifer; and can act as a drain, allowing surface water runoff and debris to enter the groundwater and contaminate it. An unused well is a well that is no longer used, is not sealed, and may be buried or forgotten. The process to seal a well includes clearing debris from the well and then filling it with a special grout material. The sealing of an unused well must be done by a professional.

The following are some steps that residents can take to locate any potential unused wells on their property:

Well searches generally start with a visual inspection. Unused wells are often visible as a 1-1/4" to 6" diameter steel pipe sticking above the ground, the floor of a basement or basement offset, or a well pit. However, older wells may have casing made of concrete, tile, rock, brick or stone; and many newer wells are cased with plastic pipe. Some wells were originally buried, and if properties have been remodeled, wells may be built over or around, cut off or buried. Properties with a long history may have more than one well. Properties that were once used as farms are more likely to have multiple wells to serve barns, irrigation and/or other purposes.

Below is a list of physical evidence that could help you in finding unused wells:

- Casing visible above ground, concrete slab or through a basement floor
- Evidence of a well, such as a circular ring in cement or patch in the floor
- Basement offset (small room off of basement, sometimes under steps)
- Glass block or patch in step or concrete (access for well below)
- Windmill (usually directly over well)
- Pit in yard or basement (may be covered with wood, concrete or steel; well may be at the bottom of pit or the pit may be a dug well)
- Waterline (pipe) or patched hole through basement floor or basement wall
- Water system components (ie. Pressure tank, pump, or evidence of former components like 'shadow' lines on floor or wall)
- Electrical components (wiring through basement floor/wall, control box)
- Low spot in yard, circular depression (may be damp)
- Outbuildings (may be well house)
- Additions, false walls, paneling which may 'hide' well

Residents of Harris are urged to look for any unused wells on their property. If you find an unused and unsealed well on your property, please contact the Harris City Clerk.

Harris Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) MN-00628 - Low Vulnerability

