

Groundwater, Drinking Water and the Need for Source Protection

VIEWPOINTS

▶ **Viewpoints are the Conservation Authority's point of view on some of the everyday environmental issues and situations people find themselves in along the Rideau.**

▶ **Visit our website @ www.rideauvalley.on.ca or contact our Landowner Resource Centre at 692-2390 for more information.**

▶ **Sources:**

- **The Groundwater Foundation @ www.groundwater.org**
- **Conservation Ontario @ www.conservation-ontario.on.ca**
- **Environment Canada @ www.ec.gc.ca/water**

Contrary to what a lot of people think, groundwater is rarely found in underground rivers or lakes. Rather, groundwater is water that fills the cracks and pores of rocks and sediments that lie beneath the surface — much like the way water saturates a sponge.



For the many thousands of people who live and work in the Rideau Valley, groundwater is the source of daily drinking water.

Groundwater is also one of the key parts of the amazing water cycle which cleans and recycles water not only in our watershed but around the world. Despite its critical importance to us and natural world, groundwater is often taken for granted. Out of sight, out of mind. But there are storm clouds gathering on the horizon.

The Walkerton tragedy and recent incidents of contaminated or degraded wells in our watershed remind us that taking groundwater for granted is dangerous. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, watershed municipalities and the RVCA are working to learn more about how our local groundwater systems work, how much water is there and how to protect it from contamination.

“Source Water Protection” is the new phrase being used to describe the protection of groundwater and really, any water source including rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands.

After all, all these sources are linked. There is a strong movement across Ontario with Conservation Authorities and other environmental organizations to protect our vital groundwater resources over the long term. RVCA is a partner in a number of ongoing studies. The biggest challenge ahead will be to educate and inform individuals and families of their own responsibilities for not only understanding groundwater but also protecting their private drinking water source through care and maintenance of this precious resource.

It is crucial to protect and conserve our groundwater. It can start with simple, yet important things at home, like:

1. dispose of chemicals properly
2. take used motor oil to a recycling centre
3. protect your well through proper construction and regular maintenance
4. ensure your septic system is working properly and pump it regularly
5. limit the amount of fertilizer used on your lawn and around your well
6. reduce water consumption (shut off water while brushing teeth, run full loads of dishes and laundry, check for leaky faucet)
7. protect water quality in lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands

Working together, all these simple steps can have a dramatic impact on protecting our groundwater and ourselves.