

Fact Sheet

What every farmer needs to know about the *Clean Water Act* and Source Protection Planning

Under the *Clean Water Act*, Source Protection Plans will be developed for watersheds across Ontario by local Source Protection Committees. Below are some common questions you may have.

Will my land be affected by the *Clean Water Act*?

The *Clean Water Act* protects 'municipal' sources of drinking water. That means Source Protection Planning will only affect land that is located near a municipal well, a municipal water intake pipe, or a cluster of private drinking water sources if a municipality chooses to include them in the planning process. The area of land to be protected around municipal wells and intakes is still being determined and will depend on local conditions.

In many parts of northern Ontario **no** agricultural land will be affected by Source Protection Planning under the *Clean Water Act* because there are no farms near municipal wells or intake pipes. In southern Ontario, early studies show that less than **one percent** of the total area is likely to be affected by this program.

How can I find out if *my land* is going to be affected by the *Clean Water Act*?

To find out if your land is going to be affected by the *Clean Water Act* or Source Protection Planning, contact your local Conservation Authority. You can find out which Conservation Authority you belong to by going to www.conservationontario.ca and clicking on *Find Your CA*. You can also call Conservation Ontario at 905-895-0716.

If my land is in an affected area, what sorts of farming activities are going to be restricted?

The *Clean Water Act* is concerned with protecting municipal sources of drinking water from many types of threats. In terms of agriculture, Source Protection Planning will look at activities such as improperly managed manure, improper use of pesticides and fertilizers or storage of fuels. Fortunately, most farms already have good farming practices in place, such as nutrient management plans, healthy grassed stream buffers and barriers to prevent livestock from entering creeks and rivers.

When Source Protection Committees begin to create Source Protection Plans over the coming years, they will look for ways to ensure farming activities do not impact municipal water supplies. In some of the most sensitive areas, such as the areas closest to a municipal well or intake pipe, landowners will have the chance to work with a risk management professional to develop plans to reduce significant risks to drinking water sources. There may be a situation where an activity is prohibited all together, but nobody will know for sure what measures will be required until the Source Protection Plans are completed, and that is still a few years away.

Will I be compensated for any changes I need to make under the *Clean Water Act*?

Over the next three years, the Province has made \$21 million in funding available to help landowners located near municipal sources of drinking water. This program is called the **Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program** and focuses on activities around municipal wells and water intake pipes that could potentially affect the quality and quantity of municipal drinking water. Funding is currently available for:

- Upgrading or closing wells
- Inspecting and upgrading septic systems

- Preventing erosion and runoff
- Managing manure
- Improving barns

To find out if you are eligible for funding, contact your local conservation authority, or the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) if your farm is registered under the Canada-Ontario Farm Stewardship Program (COFSP).

Can Conservation Authority staff come onto my property without permission?

The *Clean Water Act* authorizes Conservation Authority staff to enter property if this is necessary to assess whether or not there is a threat to a community's drinking water source. Staff must be formally designated and receive formal training. However, Conservation Authority staff will contact landowners and get permission before entering any property

Who is in charge of Source Protection Planning in my area?

Your local Source Protection Committee is responsible for looking at threats to municipal drinking water sources in your area and coming up with the best ways to reduce those threats. The process will take up to four years. To find out who is on your local Source Protection Committee, go to http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca/source_protection/otherswpreionsindex.htm and find a link for your **Source Protection Region or Area** where committee members are listed. Once the plans are drafted all members of the community will have a chance to review them and ask questions before they become final.

Can I participate on my local Source Protection Committee?

Source Protection Committees have already been created by the Minister of the Environment and most have an agricultural representative. However these committees have relied on and will continue to rely on working groups and public feedback. In fact, all Source Protection Committees are required by law to consult with the public at set times over the coming years and as technical reports are drafted. To get involved or to provide feedback throughout the process, go to http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca/source_protection/otherswpreionsindex.htm and find a link for your **Source Protection Region or Area** or call your local Conservation Authority. You can call Conservation Ontario for the phone number for any Conservation Authority (905-895-0716).

What if I don't like what the Source Protection Committee decides?

Once Source Protection Committees have finished creating a draft Source Protection Plan, they are required by law to make it available to the public for comment for at least 30 days and possibly longer. The best place to watch for this opportunity to comment is in your local newspaper or on your local Source Protection Region or Area website. Source Protection Committees are then required to review and respond to all public comments. Final Source Protection Plans will be submitted to the Minister of the Environment for approval. Even once Source Protection Plans have been approved by the Minister of the Environment, you can make a formal appeal.

Will information about my land be made available to the public?

Conservation Authorities are not allowed to release personal information about landowners and their property. According to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, personal information **cannot be made public** and this applies to all reports and documents involved in the Source Protection Planning process.

Where can I find more information?

Ministry of the Environment's Website

www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/cleanwater/index.php

Conservation Ontario's Website

www.conservationontario.ca

Your local Conservation Authority Website

To find your local Conservation Authority or Source Protection Region or Area go to:

http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca/source_protection/otherswpreionsindex.htm

Or call Conservation Ontario at 905-895-0716