

Cover your well with a cap to keep unwanted items out. A sealed, vented cap is best. If you're having a new well drilled, make sure the casing is grouted. Check with DEP about guidelines for well construction. For more information on private wells, access the DEP internet website at www.dep.state.pa.us (directLINK private wells).

For anyone with an abandoned well, ask DEP or the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey, how to fill in and plug the abandoned well properly. If you don't plug it, surface water (and contaminants) can flow down the well and enter the groundwater directly. Don't throw any kind of wastes - liquid or solid - in an abandoned well for the same reason.

For anyone with septic tanks, have your tank pumped out regularly so your system doesn't clog. Spread throughout the week those household chores (such as washing clothes) that use a lot of water. Otherwise, your system may not be able to handle that much wastewater.

If you know about an illegal dump that may contain hazardous wastes, call DEP in your area to report it.

Practice water conservation. The less water we use, the less that has to be cleaned up before it is available again. Install water-saving devices like flow restrictors in faucets. Take shorter showers. Fix dripping faucets and leaking toilets. Make sure the dishwasher and the clothes washer are full before you run a load. Don't leave the water running while you wash the car or handwash dishes or brush your teeth.

It's true that there are no easy answers to keeping our groundwater safe and pure. If we're going to have enough clean water for drinking and for indoor bathrooms and for agriculture and for manufacturing and for recreation, then we better start taking care of it right now. We have to understand what groundwater is, where it's been and what we've done that might affect it.

You have learned some of those things. But most importantly, you know that groundwater needs to be taken care of. And you know how to do that part.

Further Reading and References

For more information, visit us through the Pennsylvania homepage at www.state.pa.us or visit DEP directly at www.dep.state.pa.us.

Also check out the "Geology of Pennsylvania's Groundwater" (Education Series 3), by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/index.htm)

