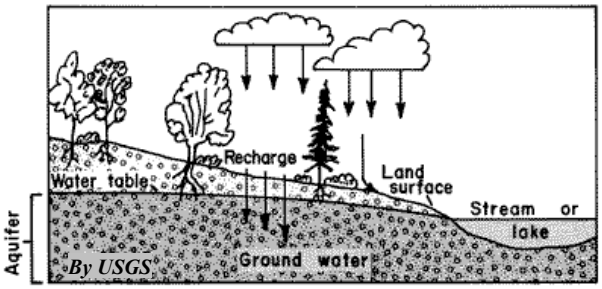
Drinking Water Protection Efforts in the Ossipee Watershed
Questions and Answers



The Ossipee Watershed Aquifer Committee has been asked to assist in answering questions that might arise concerning the proposed **Groundwater Protection Ordinance** for regional drinking water protection. If you have questions about the Ossipee Aquifer Project you can contact the Lakes Regional Planning Commission at 279-8171 or Green Mountain Conservation Group at 539-1859.

Specifically:

- What is an aquifer?
- What is a stratified drift aquifer?
- Why are aquifers important?
- What are some of the dangers to an aquifer?
- How can we protect our aquifer?
- What would this protection cost the taxpayer and/or business owner?

What is an aquifer? An aquifer is a geologic formation composed of rock, sand, or gravel that contains significant amounts of potentially recoverable water. A well is drilled into the ground to penetrate an aquifer, and water is then pumped up to the surface for consumption.

What is a stratified drift aquifer? A stratified drift aquifer is a geologic formation of predominantly well-sorted sediment deposited by or in bodies of glacial meltwater, including gravel, sand silt, or clay which contains sufficient saturated permeable material to yield significant quantities of water to wells. A **Groundwater Protection Ordinance** would apply only to the stratified drift aquifers and the wellhead protection areas for community wells. A map of these areas will be adopted with the ordinance and will be available for review at the town.

Why are aquifers important? An aquifer acts as a natural filter. As water flows through it, sediment and other particles (like bacteria) are trapped and the water is purified naturally. The water supply for the region is pumped directly from an aquifer through public or private wells to schools, businesses, churches, private homes and apartments.

What are some of the dangers to an aquifer? As the communities in the watershed grow, certain "higher risk" land use activities can increase the potential for contaminating the aquifer. As these activities increase over an aquifer, contamination from things such as, landfills, storm drains, fertilizers, agrichemicals, and spills of petroleum products, paints, or thinners can all have a detrimental effect on the water quality. The more activity, the more chances there are for unintentional contamination.

How can we protect our aquifer? We can protect our aquifer by prohibiting a few new land uses that present the greatest threat to the aquifer, and requiring those certain land uses that continuously use gas, oil, solvents or other harmful substances to follow Best Management Practices, and by providing greater education to residents about protecting water resources. BMP's are common-sense practices, like making sure containers that hold gas or oil are covered when not in use, that reduce the potential for spills and contamination of groundwater or water supplies. NH Department of Environmental Services reports that it spends approximately $400,000 per month cleaning up sites where gasoline has been released and contaminated groundwater.

What would this protection cost the taxpayer and/or business owner? The ordinance would be administered by the current building inspector or Code Enforcement Officer as part of the position's regular duties and may not result in additional cost to the taxpayer. In situations that are especially complex, the assistance of NH Dept. of Environmental Services may be requested, or for new uses, the town may charge the business a fee for an outside consultant, but those instances will not be the rule.