



Source Water Protection Program

The **New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA)** now offers a new **Source Water Protection Program** to help address rural community water issues. In contrast to our existing Groundwater Protection Program, our new program uses a comprehensive area wide or watershed approach to work with communities that have source water rated with high or medium susceptibility to potential contamination. Source water is defined as; “Any aquifer, surface water body, or watercourse from which water is taken either periodically or continuously by a public water system for drinking or food processing purposes.” NYRWA’s Source Water Protection Program stems directly from New York State Department of Health’s (NYSDOH) Source Water Assessment Program. In order to fully appreciate NYRWA’s new Source Water Protection Program, a brief explanation of the Source Water Assessment Program is in order.

NYSDOH Source Water Assessment Program comes as a result of 1996 Federal Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). SDWA amendments specifically state that source water used by a public water system be evaluated to identify possible contaminant threats to the source water quality and evaluate the susceptibility of the public water supply to the potential contaminant threats. The purpose of the Source Water Assessment Program is to compile and organize existing information and data for making better decisions regarding source water protection. The Source Water Assessment Program does not impose any new mandates or regulations on owners or operators of public water systems.

The components of a source water assessment evaluation are first the **delineation of the source water protection area**. The protection area will be identified as the area of land surrounding the well, stream or other water body that likely contributes water to each source of public water. After this has been accomplished, there is a **complete contaminant inventory of the source water protection area**. The contaminant inventory involves identifying and listing potential sources of contamination that could adversely affect the quality of the source water. Following the contaminant inventory, a **susceptibility analysis will be conducted for the protection area**. This involves evaluating the likelihood that a source of public drinking water could be contaminated.

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NYRWA's Source Water Protection Program is an EPA funded program that provides free technical assistance to develop source water protection plans for rural communities. The purpose of the source water protection plan is to reduce or eliminate the potential threat to drinking water supplies within source water protection areas either through federal, state, or local regulatory and/or non-regulatory measures centered on an involved public. NYRWA's Source Water Protection Program is completely voluntary and is geared to each specific communities source water protection needs. Each community in the source water protection area will have representation on a "planning team". This ensures that the communities involved have plan ownership.

The Source Water Protection Plan is to be designed to support conservation and watershed protection activities, while avoiding unnecessary adverse effects on other activities within the source water protection area. The Source Water Protection Plan will minimally be comprised of seven components. Each plan will include the following:

- **A map outlining the source water protection area.**
- **Source water inventories.**
- **Potential contaminant source inventories.**
- **Definition of each entities responsibility/ authority in relation to potential sources of contamination.**
- **Preventative measures that may be initiated by each entity.**
- **A contingency plan that will consist of a strategy for supplying safe water to the consumer in the event of contamination or disruption of service.**
- **A steering committee to review and update the plan.**

Along with having all seven of these components, the Source Water Protection Plan will also include one or more elements of public education.

The Source Water Protection Program along with all of New York Rural Water Association's programs is geared to working with rural communities at the local level. Public water supplies are a valuable resource that is much easier to protect and keep pristine by taking preventative measures than trying to mitigate problems after the fact. By taking a proactive stance, local shareholders in the community can protect their resources for future generations. You can get this process started by contacting **Joshua Bossard- Source Water Protection Specialist** at **(518) 828-3155 Ext. 23.** or by email at **Bossard@nyruralwater.org**