

EPA's Wellhead Protection Program

Recognizing that the best way to maintain high quality drinking water is to prevent contaminants from reaching drinking water sources, in 1986 the Safe Drinking Water Act was amended to require states to develop Wellhead Protection Programs. Through this program, states help communities to:

- form a local team which will assist with protection of public supply wells in their area;
- determine the land area which provides water to public supply wells;
- identify existing and potential sources of contamination;
- manage potential sources of contamination to minimize their threat to drinking water sources; and
- develop a contingency plan to prepare for an emergency well closing and to plan for future water supply needs.

All six New England states began carrying out EPA-approved Wellhead Protection Programs in 1990. In 1997 the New England states reported that 62% of community water systems using ground water (serving 5,037,529 people) have taken action to protect their sources from contamination. Through the newer Source Water Assessment Program many wellhead protection programs developed in the early 1990's are being updated.

In accordance with EPA mandates, Massachusetts DEP encourages communities to form Wellhead Protection Committees to develop local Wellhead Protection Plans for submission to the DEP Drinking Water Program.

