

## Wellhead Protection Plan News Release

The City of Gillett has prepared a Wellhead Protection Plan for its municipal wells. Wellhead protection planning is a requirement of the 1986 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and is intended to minimize the risk of contamination of public wells. For new municipal wells, a plan must be approved by the DNR and adopted by the municipality before the well can be placed in service. Gillett has three wells, which draw water from the bedrock sandstone and an alluvial sand and gravel aquifer. The first step in the process is to delineate the area contributing groundwater to a well. Groundwater is recharged by infiltration of rainfall that moves downward to the water table. Below the water table, groundwater moves in a more horizontal direction, generally toward a lower point such as a river. At Gillett, groundwater moves generally toward the Oconto River. By knowing this, plus the permeability of the aquifer, plus the pumping rate of the well and a few other factors, the size and shape of the "capture area" of groundwater for a well can be determined.

Then the potential contaminant sources in the capture area are identified to get an idea of the possible types of contaminants that might be released to the ground and the types of possible sources. Potential sources include fuel tanks, pesticide storage and application, industrial facilities, landfills, wastewater treatment plants, and many other types of structures and activities. With this information, the most effective protective measures can be selected. Protective measures can range from enforceable zoning or ordinances to simply making people aware of the wellhead protection area, its purpose and the importance of being extra careful with polluting materials in the area.

Ron Anderson, Water Utility Operator for the City has been working with Ed Morse, groundwater specialist with the Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA), to prepare the plan. WRWA is an association of public water and wastewater utilities, of which Gillett is a member. As Mr. Morse says, wellhead protection makes sense. It's much less expensive to prevent contamination than to have to treat contaminated water or to replace a contaminated well.

*For more information to expand this article:*

*Ed Morse 9201648-7578*

*Ron Anderson 9201598-0324*

*Dave Lindorff, DNR, Wellhead Protection Program Coordinator 6081266-9265*