

Sealing Abandoned Wells in Traverse County

August 2009

Why should I seal my abandoned/unused well?

Unsealed abandoned wells provide direct pathways for contaminants to quickly enter groundwater. Groundwater is the main source of drinking water for most of the people in Traverse County and surrounding areas – so protecting it is everybody's business. Also, when you sell your home or property, you have to disclose the status of the well on your property. Many times the buyer's mortgage lender will not provide the loan unless the well is sealed or it is being used. So, if you have an abandoned well, you may want to have it sealed now so that in the future you can sell your home more easily.

What does the law require?

By law, a well must be in use, be under a maintenance permit, or sealed by a licensed contractor. A well must be sealed if:

- the well is not in use;
- the well is contaminated;
- the well has been improperly sealed in the past;
- the well threatens the quality of the groundwater;
- or the well otherwise poses a threat to health or safety.

If you have an unused well and wish to keep

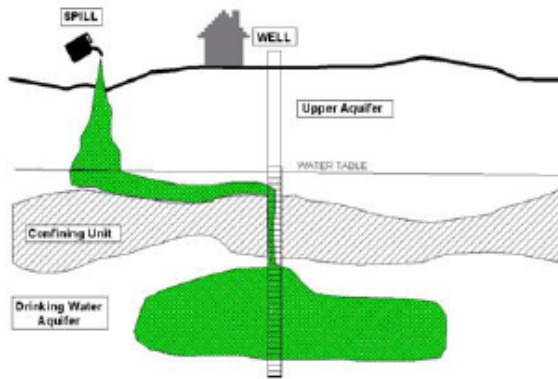
the well for future use, you may apply for a special maintenance permit from the Minnesota Department of Health. The permit requires an annual fee (currently \$100), and is only issued if the well meets minimum sanitary requirements.

How are wells sealed?

State law requires that the sealing be done by a licensed well contractor.

Don't try to seal the well yourself. A licensed well contractor has the necessary equipment and expertise to seal your well properly. The contractor can also handle all of the necessary paperwork. Before sealing the well, the contractor will remove any pumping

equipment that may still be in place and remove any debris or other obstructions from the well. The well is then sealed by pumping a grout mixture into the well. The law requires that the grout is pumped in from the bottom of the well up to ensure the entire well is filled. Only a licensed contractor will have the necessary equipment to do the job correctly. When the job is done, the contractor will submit a sealing record to the Minnesota Department of Health. You will also get a copy of the well sealing record from the licensed well contractor. Keep it in a safe place. It provides proof that the well has been properly sealed, and no longer poses a hazard.



What if I still use my old well?

If the well is still in use, you don't need to do anything - even if you just use your old well for watering your lawn. If you use it for your home's water supply, you can keep doing that as well.

How much will it cost?

The costs will vary depending on the depth and diameter of the well. Typical costs in our county range from \$400 to \$700 sealing the average 4-inch diameter domestic well. If the well is very deep or has a large diameter, costs will be higher. Also, if access to the well is difficult, there may be additional charges.

What costs are covered?

The Traverse SWCD has a program to assist with the expenses of sealing an abandoned well. Only the direct costs for sealing the well are covered. This might include the costs of pulling the old pump and equipment, the grouting material, and pumping the grout into the old well. 50% of direct expenses - up to a maximum payment of \$300 - will be reimbursed.

Where can I get more information?

For information about the Traverse SWCD well sealing cost-share program or an application, call the SWCD office at (320) 563-8218 or check the District's web page at: <http://www.traverseswcd.org> **You must submit an application and get approved BEFORE to sealing a well.** For information about the rules and regulations regarding well sealing, contact the Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) Well Management Section at (651) 215-0811. MDH also has a web page with information at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/abandwel.html>