

The Clean Water Act

Roles and Responsibilities

The Ontario government has created the Clean Water Act and passed the first set of regulations under the Act. These include the Source Protection Areas and Regions, Source Protection Committees, Terms of Reference, Time Limits, and Miscellaneous Regulations.

Source protection plans will be locally developed and delivered. Communities will use a science-based approach to protecting their water supplies, one that works for them. But how will municipalities, conservation authorities, community groups and residents work together towards the common goal of safe water?

What does the Clean Water Act mean for your community? Source protection planning will build on the work many municipalities are already doing to protect drinking water. Source protection authorities will be established to coordinate source protection across multiple municipalities within the larger watershed. That body will then help create a source protection committee which will represent the broad interests across the watershed.

Source Protection Authority

Generally, the source protection authority follows the same structure as the conservation authority boards, which are made up of members appointed by municipal councils. The geographic area of each authority covers the watershed. These source protection areas are grouped together to form 19 source protection

regions. One source protection authority is the lead and co-ordinates the efforts of the authorities across each region. This lead authority will establish the source protection committee for the region, and provide support to the committee during the development of the terms of reference, assessment report and the source protection plan.

Source Protection Committee

Source protection committees will prepare the terms of reference, the assessment report and the source protection plan. There will be strong municipal representation on the committee which will also include conservation authorities, farmers, small businesses and a range of other stakeholders within the watershed. Through the source protection committee, municipalities will work to identify, assess and address risks to drinking water within their municipal wellhead and intake protection areas. Stakeholders such as local property owners could also participate through working groups, supporting and consulting on the work of the source protection committee.

Municipalities

Municipalities will have a strong role in developing and implementing source protection plans in all areas under municipal jurisdiction. Municipalities are already responsible for the delivery of municipal drinking water and land use planning and the proposed source protection

process will build on this work. Municipalities will develop and implement policies to reduce risks posed by activities located in areas under their jurisdiction. This could include requiring individual property owners to take action on significant drinking water threats located within their wellhead and intake protection areas.

Conservation Authorities

Conservation authorities, with their watershed-based perspective, will help source protection committees develop source protection plans by gathering and sharing information, facilitating cooperation and coordination among communities and stakeholders, and providing technical support and advice to the source protection committees.

Property owners, industry, businesses, farmers, community groups and the public

It is important that people become involved in local source protection planning and help to find practical, workable solutions. Engaging the local community in source protection planning will build partnerships to protect common interests. Anyone engaged in an activity that poses a threat or may be affected by the source protection plan will be encouraged to become involved early on, and could be involved through representation on the source protection committees or working groups.

Broader public consultation across the watershed at three key stages — during the preparation of the terms of reference, the assessment report and the source protection plan — will provide an opportunity for everyone to provide their input.

Further information on the Clean Water Act and the regulations can be found on the Ministry of the Environment website at:
www.ontario.ca/cleanwater

More local information on drinking water source protection can be found at:
http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca/source_protection/otherswpreionsindex.htm

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