

## Drinking Water and Land Program

# Buying a home with a well

### Buyer Beware

When purchasing a home with its own water supply (well) you should be aware that there is minimal regulatory oversight on private wells. The homeowner is responsible for ensuring the water is safe for drinking, cooking and household sanitation. Wells with poor water quality can be expensive to treat. Having a qualified professional inspect the well, before you purchase, can save you time and money.



### Making sure all is well with your well

Here are a few questions you should consider:

➤ **Are there potential sources of contamination?**

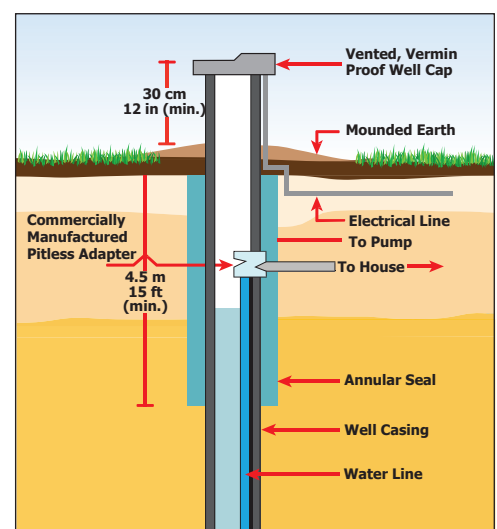
The general rule is that any source of contamination should be a minimum of 100 feet (30 metres) away from your well. Be aware of potential sources (i.e. septic fields, livestock pens, etc.) of contamination on the property and neighbouring properties.

➤ **Is the well properly constructed?**

A properly constructed well will prevent the entry of surface contamination and should have the following:

- Well casing that extends 12 to 24 inches above the ground.
- No visible cracks or holes in the casing.
- Cap (lid) which is secure and watertight.
- Ground around the casing which slopes away to prevent surface water from ponding and seeping into the well.

A key piece of information is the **Well Drillers Log** that will tell you the depth of the well, soil conditions, volume of water produced and construction materials. The current homeowner may have a copy for your review. There are two online resources provided by the Ministry of Environment that may be used to obtain well information: BC Water Resource Atlas and the WELLS Database. The website is [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan\\_protect\\_sustain/groundwater/wells.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/wells.html)



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➤ **Does the well produce enough water to meet your daily needs?**

- According to Living Water Smart BC we use approximately 490 litres (108 gallons) of water per person, per day.
- The well drillers log should tell you approximately how much water the well produced at the time of construction.
- You can always hire a qualified professional to conduct a Well Yield Test to determine how many liters per minute the well system can produce.
- Talk to the neighbours to see if they have any issues with their wells (quality or quantity).
- Shallow wells (less than 50 feet) are more vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations in water quantity and quality.

➤ **What is the microbiological and chemical quality of the well water? Is the water safe to drink?**

- Treating water can be expensive. So make sure you know what's in the water before you purchase the home.
- Have the water tested at a certified laboratory. Public water systems are required to use labs approved by the Provincial Health Officer for microbiological testing. A number of the labs on that list also test water (including chemical testing) for the general public. Click on the following web link, under search type in "PHO water" and you will find the most up to date list of labs: <http://lmlabs.phsa.ca>
- Contact the lab to do a Potability Test for drinking water. Labs, as a general rule, do not collect the samples. Most labs will courier you a collection kit which includes sampling instructions. Another option is to hire a qualified professional to collect the samples for you.
- If you have any questions about the test results, please call the Fraser Health, Population Public Health Call Centre at 604-587-3936 and request to be connected to the Drinking Water and Land Program.
- For more information on testing go on line to HealthLinkBC and read File #05b "Should I Get My Well Water Tested?" [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile05b.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile05b.stm)

➤ **Is the new house connected to a community sewer system or its own onsite septic system?**

Installing a new septic system can be very expensive, so be sure have the system inspected by a qualified professional before you purchase. For more details on what to look for check out the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation document listed below. In BC only an Authorized Person can construct, alter, repair or maintain a sewerage system. <http://owrp.asttbc.org/rowp-finder>

### Helpful Resources:

- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation "Buying a House with a Well and Septic System". [www.uoguelph.ca/orwc/Resources/documents/cmhc\\_homeowner\\_septic\\_and\\_well\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.uoguelph.ca/orwc/Resources/documents/cmhc_homeowner_septic_and_well_booklet.pdf)
- BC Ministry of Environment Water Stewardship. "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Water Wells and Well Water Quality". [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan\\_protect\\_sustain/groundwater/library/faq\\_grdwater.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/library/faq_grdwater.html)
- BC Ministry of Health Healthfiles on drinking water [www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/water.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/water.html)
- Fraser Health website. [www.fraserhealth.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/drinkingwater)