

# WELL OWNER TIP SHEET: OLD, UNUSED WATER WELLS

Each parcel of land has a history as old as the earth and sky. It is common for properties to have had many owners through the years. Among the land-use changes that may have occurred is the construction of one or more water wells.

Wells may have been constructed by drilling, augering, jetting, or even by digging a hole or excavating around a spring or seepage. Out-of-service wells of any type may pose potential safety hazards and threats to groundwater quality if not correctly maintained or abandoned (decommissioned).



## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY OLD WATER WELLS

- There may be liability issues to consider if an old well on your property is proved to be a conduit for contaminants that reach neighboring groundwater.
- Casings may deteriorate and rust and new owners or property developers can build over the old well site or unknowingly create a hazardous land use.
- Abandoned dug wells do not typically lead to contamination risk for deep aquifers, but can create a physical safety hazard for construction equipment in addition to a danger to people and animals that may be injured falling into the well.

## WHAT TO DO WITH AN OLD WATER WELL

- Once a well is determined to have no current or potential future use, a water well contractor should be contacted to give advice about the most appropriate well decommissioning method. The water well professional will have knowledge of well decommissioning code requirements.
- In most cases, homeowners are required to notify their local Department of Environmental Protection or Water Quality Division to document the decommissioning of the well.

## HOW TO LOCATE AND IDENTIFY OLD WATER WELLS ON YOUR PROPERTY

- Landowners should find the location of any old or out-of-service wells.
- Clues to the location of these wells include but aren't limited to pipes sticking out of the ground, depressions in the ground, old maps, plans, and property title documents.



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