

Water Efficiency

Private Wells and Public Water Systems

Practicing water efficiency is key to keeping a private water system running smoothly. Groundwater is replenished by rainfall—and melted snow in applicable areas—and it shouldn't be taken for granted.

Being informed about your well and the groundwater that it uses is the first step toward always having a plentiful supply of water on hand. Following are more tips.

Learn

- Investigate the groundwater in your area—it's easy to do. Most state departments of natural resources have groundwater resource maps detailing groundwater availability. The departments usually have publications outlining information about findings, as well as conditions, from observation wells. Some libraries will even have the publications available in their reference sections.
- Contractors are required to fill out well logs when they complete a project and give them to their respective local divisions of water. Among the information the logs include is the depth of the well, geologic materials below the surface, and the well's yield and depth of water at the time of drilling.

By comparing the depth of water to your well's total depth, you can see approximately how much water is stored in the well. This will give you an idea of how much you need to conserve.

- If you are having a problem with your water yield, pressure, or quality, do some investigating. Ask neighbors, local health officials, or water administrators if other well owners in your area are encountering similar problems.

Call

- If there appears to be a well yield problem, contact a professional contractor immediately. Have him conduct a complete evaluation. The problem may not necessarily be with the water, but rather a mechanical or electrical dilemma. He can check the well's water level without pumping and compare it to the original water level shown on the well log, to determine how much the level has changed and how much water is left in the well.

Maintain

- Schedule your well for a checkup by a contractor every year. He not only will test the water quality, but also will check for clogs in the well system that can significantly hamper water yield. Older wells can become clogged or encrusted and need to be cleaned from time to time.
- If the well is relatively new and there are low water yield problems, it could be repaired several ways. A low-yield well system, drilling the current well deeper, or constructing a new well are among the possibilities.

Low-yield systems use switches for the pump and a storage tank to provide a steady supply of water. They are more economical than drilling a deeper well or a new well altogether.

However, drilling deeper when groundwater can be obtained in a deeper aquifer is a solution when construction of wells will allow for it. At times, though, a new well is the best answer. If that is the case, remember to properly seal and abandon the old well for safety purposes and to protect against water contamination.

Practice

- The most important step to ensuring a plentiful water supply always is practicing smart water efficiency. Whether it is in the home, garden, or yard, or if the water use is for cleaning, dining, or just fun in the sun, try to practice conservation at all times.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on your private water well, contact your local contractor. Also, visit the website of the National Ground Water Association, www.ngwa.org, and its site just for well owners, www.wellowner.org.