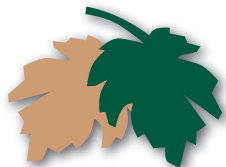


Everyone has a role to play protecting drinking water



ASK AN EarthCare Expert

Question: I see “Source Water Protection Zone” signs near lakes in Sudbury. What do these signs mean?

Answer: In Sudbury, municipal drinking water is taken from both surface water (lakes and rivers) and groundwater sources (wells). Source protection signs are placed near the wells, lakes

and rivers that provide municipal drinking water in an effort to raise awareness.

There are plenty of reasons to protect water at its source and prevent pollution, but the three most important are to reduce the risk of human disease and illness, to reduce the need for costly treatment and cleanup efforts and to prevent ecosystem degradation.

To protect a source of drinking water, one has to consider the watershed as a whole, not just the lake or river itself.

For example, the Ramsey Lake watershed includes all of the surrounding waterbodies that flow into the lake. That’s why it’s important to think about how activity over the entire watershed can impact a drinking water source.

Heavy rain can wash fertilizer or pesticide applied to a lawn into

a creek that ultimately flows into a drinking water source. Even though the source of contamination is far from the actual lake-shore, there can be definite implications for source water quality.

Similarly with groundwater wells, contamination originating far from the wellhead itself can still cause concern for drinking water source protection.

Contaminants in surface runoff and toxic spills are common threats to drinking water sources. Others that may be less obvious and include flushing or pouring hazardous wastes down residential drains. Wastewater treatment plants are designed to treat biological waste and not artificial contaminants.

Tips for keeping drinking water sources clean:

- Visit the Household Hazardous Waste Depot or call the Toxic

Taxi to dispose of your household hazardous waste – it’s free.

- Prevent spills by using drop cloths. If a spill occurs, cover it with kitty litter, saw dust or another absorbent material.

- Ensure your car is not leaking oil, anti-freeze, brake fluid or windshield wiper fluid.

- Use phosphate free or biodegradable soap when washing your car at home.

- Consider using salt-free de-icers during the winter time. Alternatives to salt include sand, ash or gravel.

- Limit use of harsh pesticides and weed killers and seek out chemical-free alternatives.

- Pet waste should be picked up immediately and kept away from water bodies, especially source protection areas.

To learn more about source protection efforts or to check out

local watershed maps, visit the sourcewatersudbury.ca and nickeldistrict.ca.

Thanks to our EarthCare Sudbury partners, Nickel District Conservation Authority and the City of Greater Sudbury for their assistance in responding to this question. EarthCare Sudbury is a network of more than 150 local businesses, organizations and agencies committed to helping the city become greener, cleaner, healthier and more sustainable. Find out more at greatersudbury.ca/earthcare or call 311.

Do you have a question about an environmental issue? Ask an EarthCare Expert. Submit your questions online at greatersudbury.ca/earthcare, then watch for this column published in the Northern Life for an expert response.