



## Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program



Conserving, protecting and improving the natural resources and environment of the state.

# Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program

## Municipal Manual



Connecticut Department of  
Energy and Environmental Protection

Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse  
Hartford, Connecticut

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Aquifer Protection Area Program

Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program Municipal Manual is available online at:

[www.ct.gov/deep/aquiferprotection](http://www.ct.gov/deep/aquiferprotection)

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## Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program Municipal Manual

Water is a vital natural resource, essential to all life on earth. In Connecticut, many of our residents rely on groundwater for their drinking water supply, whether it is from private wells or public water supply wells. Groundwater is extracted through wells from underground water sources known as aquifers. Aquifers can provide a clean, safe, reliable source of drinking water now and in the future, but are vulnerable to contamination from overlying land use activities.

The Aquifer Protection Area Program was developed to protect the state's largest public water supply aquifers. This is a proactive program, intended to prevent contamination of public water supplies by managing land use activities in critical aquifer areas. The program is a three-way partnership between the State, water companies and municipalities. The State provides oversight and technical support to both the water companies and the municipalities. Water companies do the work necessary to map the land areas that need to be protected. Municipalities are responsible for adopting and enforcing land use regulations to minimize the contaminant threats to our aquifers.

The Aquifer Protection Area program balances protection of our public drinking water sources with the needs of continued economic growth. New high-risk land uses are not permitted to locate in Aquifer Protection Areas. Existing high-risk land uses in these areas, while subject to best management practices to minimize contaminant threats, are allowed to continue to operate, change and grow to keep pace with the economy. As the state's primary land use control agents, the Municipal Aquifer Protection Agencies serve as the keystone of the Aquifer Protection Program. This manual provides Connecticut's Municipal Aquifer Protection Agencies with the guidance and reference materials needed to regulate aquifer protection areas.

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# Foreword



Dear Aquifer Protection Agency Staff and Members:

We commend you for recognizing the value and importance of protecting and preserving the quality of groundwater in our state. As you know, groundwater is a precious resource that requires careful stewardship to ensure an abundant and clean supply. In Connecticut, more than half of the population relies on groundwater for their drinking supply, and this percentage is increasing. As the state's population grows, communities are turning to community wells to meet the demand for water. It is through the efforts of committed people, like you, that Connecticut will succeed in protecting its groundwater and drinking water supplies.

The Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Program (Connecticut General Statutes [CGS] § 22a-354a through § 22a-354bb) was established for the purpose of identifying critical water supply aquifer areas and protecting them from pollution. By managing land use activities in these areas, we can protect our water supply aquifer areas from contamination.

This manual provides the basic tools necessary for making decisions on regulated land uses and management of the state's Aquifer Protection Areas. It instructs Aquifer Protection Agency Staff and Members how to use these tools and to evaluate and make decisions about land use activities that threaten groundwater quality. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection supports municipal Aquifer Protection Agencies through education, training and technical assistance.

The Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Program requires a commitment from state and local government, businesses, water companies and individual residents, but the reward – clean drinking water for now and the future – is well worth the effort.

Thank you for supporting our goal of protecting and improving the quality of Connecticut's groundwater for this and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel C. Esty". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Daniel C. Esty  
Commissioner

# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

Introduction	1
Groundwater Basics	2

## 1 THE MUNICIPAL AQUIFER PROTECTION AGENCY

1.1 Purpose of the Aquifer Protection Area Program	7
1.2 Authorization of the Aquifer Protection Agency	7
1.3 Powers and Duties of the Aquifer Protection Agency	7
1.4 Conducting Agency Business	7

## 2 LAND USE INVENTORY

2.1 Inventory Guidelines	9
2.2 Completing or Updating the Inventory	10
2.3 Inspecting Potentially Regulated Facilities	10
2.4 Table of Potentially Regulated Businesses and Facilities	11
2.5 Table of APA Regulated Land Use Activities	15
2.6 Sample Inventory Form	17
2.7 Sample Inventory Table	18

## 3 AQUIFER PROTECTION AREA MAPPING

3.1 Delineation of Aquifer Protection Areas	19
3.1.1 Delineation Procedures	20
3.1.2 Notice Requirements	21
3.1.3 Availability of Aquifer Protection Area Map	21
3.1.4 Effective Date of Map	21
3.1.5 Requesting Maps of Special Scale or Electronic Format	21
3.1.6 Security Issues	21
3.2 Challenges to Aquifer Protection Area Boundaries	21
3.3 Revisions of Aquifer Protection Area Boundaries	21
3.4 APA Map Delineation Flow Chart	22
3.5 Extension of APA Boundaries Flow Chart	23
3.6 Examples of Public Notices for Map Delineations of Aquifer Protection Area Boundaries	24

## 4 REGULATIONS

4.1 Overview	27
4.2 The Adoption Process	27
4.3 Drafting the Proposed Regulations	28
4.3.1 Model Regulations	28
4.3.2 Consistency with State Regulations	28
4.3.3 Setting Fee Schedules	29
4.4 Examples of Fee Schedules	30
4.5 Public Hearing Notice	33

4.6 Conducting a Public Hearing	33
4.6.1 Format	33
4.6.2 Making the Record	33
4.7 Formal Approval by DEEP	34
4.8 Effective Date of Regulations	34
4.9 Amendments to Regulations	34
4.10 Regulation Adoption Flow Chart	35
4.11 Regulation Amendment Flow Chart	36
4.12 Examples of Public Notices of Aquifer Protection Area Regulations Adoption	37

## 5 REGISTRATION PROCESSING

5.1 Regulated Activities	41
5.1.1 Exceptions	41
5.1.2 Outright Exceptions	41
5.1.3 Conditional Exceptions	41
5.2 Determining Regulated Activities	42
5.3 Registration of Existing Facilities	42
5.3.1 State Registrations	42
5.3.2 Municipal Registrations	43
5.4 New Registrations	43
5.4.1 Notice to Facility Owner(s) and Property Owner(s)	43
5.4.2 What Can Be Registered?	43
5.4.3 Who Can Register?	43
5.4.4 What is the Extent of a Registered Site?	44
5.4.5 Inactive Sites	44
5.4.6 Key Definitions	44
5.5 Municipal Agency Action	44
5.5.1 Timeframes for Action	44
5.5.2 Date of Receipt	45
5.5.3 Late Registrations	45
5.5.4 Completeness	45
5.6 Additional Registration Requirements	45
5.6.1 Considerations for Requiring Materials Management Plans	45
5.6.2 Considerations for Requiring Stormwater Management Plans	46
5.7 Issuing the Registration	46
5.8 Fees	47
5.9 Renewal of Registrations	47
5.10 Transfer of Registrations	47
5.11 Exemptions	47
5.12 Expansion of a Regulated Activity	47

5.13	Determining Regulated Uses Decision Tree	48	<b>9 PUBLIC HEARINGS</b>	
5.14	Registration Decision Tree	49	9.1	Member Participation 129
5.15	Registration Processing Flow Chart	50	9.2	Public Inspection 129
<b>6</b>	<b>PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESSING</b>		9.3	Hearing Record 129
6.1	New Permits	51	9.4	Recording the Hearing 129
6.2	Fees	51	9.5	Opportunity to Examine Witnesses 129
6.3	Municipal Agency Action	51	9.6	Continuation of Hearings 129
6.3.1	Timeframes for Action	51	9.7	Receipt of Information After the Hearing 130
6.3.2	Date of Receipt	51	9.8	Ex Parte Communications 130
6.4	Notification and Referral Requirements	51	9.9	Making the Decision/Completing the Record 130
6.5	Evaluating Permit Applications	52	<b>10 ENFORCEMENT</b>	
6.6	Public Hearings	53	10.1	Types of Violations 131
6.7	Additional Conditions	53	10.2	Investigation and Collection of Evidence 131
6.8	Renewals	53	10.3	Investigation Follow-up 133
6.9	Modifications	54	10.4	Evaluation 133
6.10	Transfers	54	10.5	Enforcement Approaches 133
6.11	Permit Processing Flow Chart	55	10.6	Who is Potentially Subject to Enforcement Action 134
6.12	Permit Decisions	56	10.7	Recordkeeping 135
<b>7</b>	<b>FORMS AND APPLICATIONS</b>		10.8	Hearing on Cease and Desist Order/ Cease and Correct Order 135
7.1	Determining Regulatory Status in Aquifer Protection Areas	58	10.9	Enforcement Flow Chart 136
7.2	Registration Form and Instructions	62	10.10	Registration and Permit Revocation Flow Chart 137
7.3	Permit Application and Instructions	79	10.11	Notice of Violation 138
7.4	Transfer Form for Registrations and Permits	94	<b>11 RELATED STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS</b>	
7.5	Environmental Compliance Information Form and Instructions	101	11.1	Related State Programs 139
7.6	Aquifer Protection Inspection Report	105	11.1.1	Wastewater Discharge Permit Program 139
<b>8</b>	<b>FORM LETTERS, REGISTRATIONS AND PERMITS</b>		11.1.2	Hazardous Waste Program 139
8.1	Initial Program Notice to Business and Facility Owners	114	11.1.3	Underground Storage Tanks Program 140
8.2	Notice of Potential Registration to Business and Facility Owners	115	11.1.4	Remediation Program 140
8.3	Registration Acknowledgement	116	11.1.5	Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance Program 140
8.4	Registration Cover Letter	117	11.1.6	Pollution Prevention Program 140
8.5	Registration Certificate	118	11.2	Related Local Programs 141
8.6	Permit Acknowledgement	119	11.2.1	Planning and Plans of Conservation and Development 141
8.7	Permit Cover Letter	120	11.2.2	Municipal Improvement Projects 141
8.8	Permit	121	11.2.3	Zoning in Aquifer Protection Areas 141
8.9	Letter of Incompleteness	124	11.2.4	Land Acquisition 141
8.10	Public Notice for a Hearing	125		
8.11	No Permit Required	126		
8.12	Notice of Decision	127		

## 12 MODEL DOCUMENTS

12.1	Model Municipal Ordinance to Designate Agency	143
12.2	Model Municipal Regulations	146
12.3	Model Municipal Regulations Reference Document	174
12.4	Model Materials Management Plan	184
12.5	Model Stormwater Management Plan	202
12.6	Stormwater Management Plan Supplement Form	205
12.7	Model Site Review Evaluation Form	213
12.8	Model Hazardous Spill Response Plan	218
12.9	Model Land Use Risk Assessment	225

## 13 STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

13.1	State Statutes 22a-354a to 354bb	231
13.2	Summary of State Land Use Regulations	242
13.3	State Land Use Regulations	244
13.4	State Land Use Regulations Flow Chart	258

## 14 APPENDICES

14.1	Table of Regulated Land Uses	259
14.2	Principal Groundwater Contaminants Table	266
14.3	Inspection Guidelines	268
14.4	Best Management Practice (BMP) Recommendations	272
14.4.1	Controlling Stormwater from Parking Lots	272
14.4.2	Disposal of Snow Accumulations from Roadways and Parking Lots	273
14.4.3	Road & Highway Construction/ Reconstruction	274
14.4.4	Road Salt Storage	276
14.4.5	Sand and Gravel Operations	277
14.4.6	Sewage Disposal and Groundwater Quality	278
14.4.7	Storage (only) of Batteries	280
14.4.8	Temporary Construction and Reconstruction Operations	281
14.4.9	Turf Management	282
14.5	APA Program Fact Sheet	286
14.6	State Map of APAs	289
14.7	List of Websites for Aquifer Protection Agencies	290
14.8	Contacts – Telephone Numbers	292

## 15 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

293

# Figures, Charts & Tables

## FIGURES

Figure 1	The Hydrologic Cycle	2
Figure 2	Groundwater	3
Figure 3	Recharge to the Water Table	4
Figure 4	Connecticut's Aquifers	4
Figure 5	Groundwater Contamination	5
Figure 6	Inventory of Potentially Regulated Facilities in CT Aquifer Protection Areas	9
Figure 7	Level A and Level B Aquifer Protection Areas	19
Figure 8	Example of a Public Notice with Map Image – City of Bristol	24
Figure 9	Example of a Public Notice with Text Only – Town of Plainville	25
Figure 10	Example of a Fee Schedule – Town of Bolton	30
Figure 11	Example of a Fee Schedule – Town of Killingly	31
Figure 12	Example of a Fee Schedule – Town of Southbury	32
Figure 13	Example of a Public Hearing Notice – City of Norwalk	38
Figure 14	Example of a Public Hearing Notice – Town of Putnam	39
Figure 15	Example of a Public Notice of an Agency's Action – Town of Bolton	40
Figure 16	State Water Management Programs	139

## FLOW CHARTS AND DECISION TREES

3.4	APA Map Delineation Flow Chart	22
3.5	Extension of APA Boundaries Flow Chart	23
4.9	Regulation Adoption Flow Chart	35
4.10	Regulation Amendment Flow Chart	36
5.13	Determining Regulated Uses Decision Tree	48
5.14	Registration Decision Tree	49
5.15	Registration Processing Flow Chart	50
6.11	Permit Processing Flow Chart	55
6.12	Permit Decisions	56
10.9	Enforcement Flow Chart	136
10.10	Registration and Permit Revocation Flow Chart	137
13.3	State Land Use Regulations Flow Chart	258

## TABLES

2.4	Table of Potentially Regulated Businesses and Facilities	11
2.5	Table of APA Regulated Land Use Activities	15
2.7	Sample Inventory Table	18
14.1	Table of Regulated Land Uses	259
14.2	Principal Groundwater Contaminants Table	266

# Acronyms

LIST OF ACRONYMS	
<b>APA</b>	Aquifer Protection Area
<b>BMPs</b>	Best Management Practices
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
<b>CGS</b>	Connecticut General Statutes
<b>DEEP</b>	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>GPS</b>	Global Positioning Satellite
<b>LID</b>	Low Impact Development
<b>MMP</b>	Materials Management Plan
<b>NPDES</b>	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
<b>POTW</b>	Publicly Owned Treatment Works
<b>RCRA</b>	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
<b>RCSA</b>	Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies
<b>RRF</b>	Resource Recovery Facility
<b>SDWA</b>	Federal Safe Drinking Water Act
<b>SPCS</b>	Significant Potential Contaminant Sources
<b>SPDES</b>	State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
<b>SPPCP</b>	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Counter Plan
<b>SWAP</b>	Source Water Assessment Program
<b>SWMP</b>	Stormwater Management Plan
<b>TSDF</b>	Treatment, Storage or Disposal Facility
<b>UST</b>	Underground Storage Tank

# Introduction

Connecticut citizens have long relied on groundwater for drinking water – both from private residential wells and public supply wells. Currently, over two million Connecticut residents rely, at least in part, on groundwater as their source of drinking water. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many public supply wells were found to be contaminated by various pollutants. In 1987 the Connecticut General Assembly passed Special Act 87-63 that established a Legislative Aquifer Protection Task Force to evaluate the need for a regulatory framework to improve the protection of Connecticut’s groundwater resources. The Task Force held numerous meetings and public hearings, conducted research over a two-year period and prepared two reports to the General Assembly concerning aquifer protection. The first Task Force report, dated March 1988, recommended that legislation be enacted to require more comprehensive mapping of groundwater resources contributing to large public supply well fields in stratified drift aquifers. Legislation passed in 1988 required the Department to develop mapping guidelines for Level B (preliminary) mapping and regulations for Level A (final) mapping of Aquifer Protection Areas, and authorized the Task Force to continue its work.

The Task Force continued to meet for another year to consider the need for a regulatory management framework to improve the protection of aquifers. A second Task Force report was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly in February 1989. That report recommended a comprehensive regulatory management framework be enacted to protect Connecticut’s largest public supply wells in stratified drift aquifers, including minimum state standards necessary to protect the most sensitive aquifer areas in Connecticut. The Connecticut General Assembly responded to the report in 1989 with unanimous passage of the Aquifer Protection Act (Connecticut General Statutes [CGS] § 22a-354a through 22a-354bb).

## The General Assembly found that:

1. aquifers are an essential natural resource and a major source of public drinking water;
2. reliance on groundwater will increase because opportunities for development of new surface water supplies are diminishing due to the rising cost of land and increasingly intense development;
3. numerous drinking water wells have been contaminated by certain land use activities and other wells are now threatened;
4. protection of existing and future groundwater supplies demand greater action by state and local government;
5. a groundwater protection program requires identification and delineation of present and future water supplies in stratified drift aquifers supplying drinking water wells;
6. a comprehensive and coordinated system of land use regulations should be established that includes state regulations which protect public drinking water wells located in stratified drift aquifers;
7. municipalities with existing or proposed public drinking water wells in stratified drift aquifers should designate aquifer protection agencies; and
8. the state should provide technical assistance and education programs on aquifer protection to ensure a plentiful supply of public drinking water for present and future generations.

The Aquifer Protection Act set forth a schedule for implementation, which started with the adoption of the state Land Use Regulations. The Land Use Regulations are a culmination of over 10 years of effort involving the Department, members of the Department’s Aquifer Protection Land Use Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee”), and numerous other interested parties. The Advisory Committee included representatives of businesses, water companies, municipal governments, regional planning agencies and environmental groups. The regulations cover twenty-eight (28) land use activities that pose a threat to groundwater. The regulations which went into effect on February 2, 2004, set deadlines for the appointment of municipal Aquifer Protection Agencies, completion of Level A mapping, delineation of Level A boundaries on municipal zoning maps, and municipal adoption of aquifer protection regulations.

Model Municipal Aquifer Protection Area Regulations were published on June 1, 2005, and revised on January 1, 2006, October 1, 2007, and October 1, 2010. Municipalities with Aquifer Protection Areas are required to adopt land use regulations based on the state’s Model Regulations. The timing of local adoption varies depending on the approval of Level A mapping for each well field.

Implementation of the Aquifer Protection Area Program has been gradual. As Level A mapping is completed for each well field by the water company, towns must delineate the Aquifer Protection Area boundaries on local zoning maps and adopt local regulations. The deadline for water companies to complete the mapping was June 2008, although a number of well fields have yet to be completed.

# Groundwater Basics

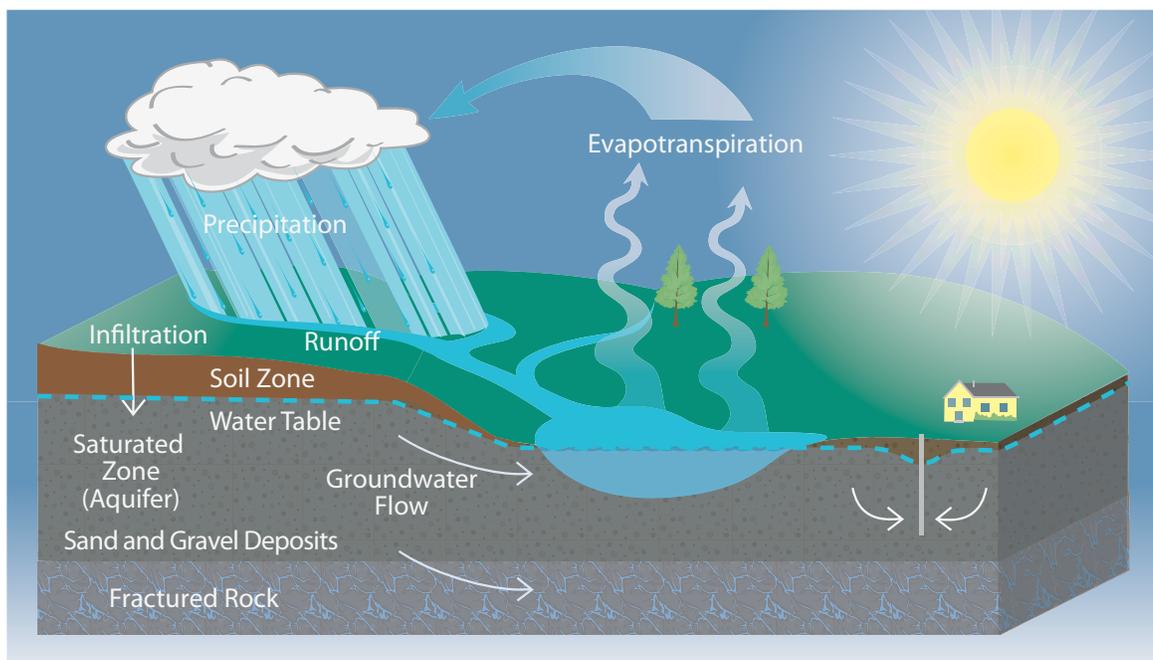
In order for an Aquifer Protection Agency to be effective, they must be knowledgeable about the natural resource they are protecting. A good understanding of the basic concepts of groundwater and how it can become contaminated will provide the Agency the information needed to make important land use decisions as they implement the Aquifer Protection Area Program.

## Groundwater Basics

Water is a precious resource, essential to all life on earth. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the Earth's surface is covered with water. However, only a small fraction of the Earth's water is available as fresh water. Unlike energy, which comes in a variety of forms, there are no substitutes for pure, fresh water. We all use water. Water is a basic necessity and is used every day for drinking, washing, cooking and watering lawns. It is also used in large quantities for industry, agriculture, manufacturing, fire protection and energy production. Most of these uses require clean, safe sources of supply.

## The Hydrologic Cycle

All water on Earth and in the atmosphere is part of the hydrologic cycle. The hydrologic cycle is the continuous circulation of water from the oceans to the atmosphere to the land and back to the oceans. This complex cycle provides us with a renewable supply of water on land. Water falls from the atmosphere to the land in the form of precipitation (rain, snow, sleet or hail). Once on land, some of the precipitation may accumulate as surface water – in streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, wetlands, and oceans. Some water may seep downward through the soil where it is stored as groundwater. Here the spaces between sand grains and gravel or cracks in the rock are filled with water. Groundwater moves very slowly – measured in feet per day – as compared with the speed of surface water, which is measured in feet per second.



**Figure 1. The Hydrologic Cycle**

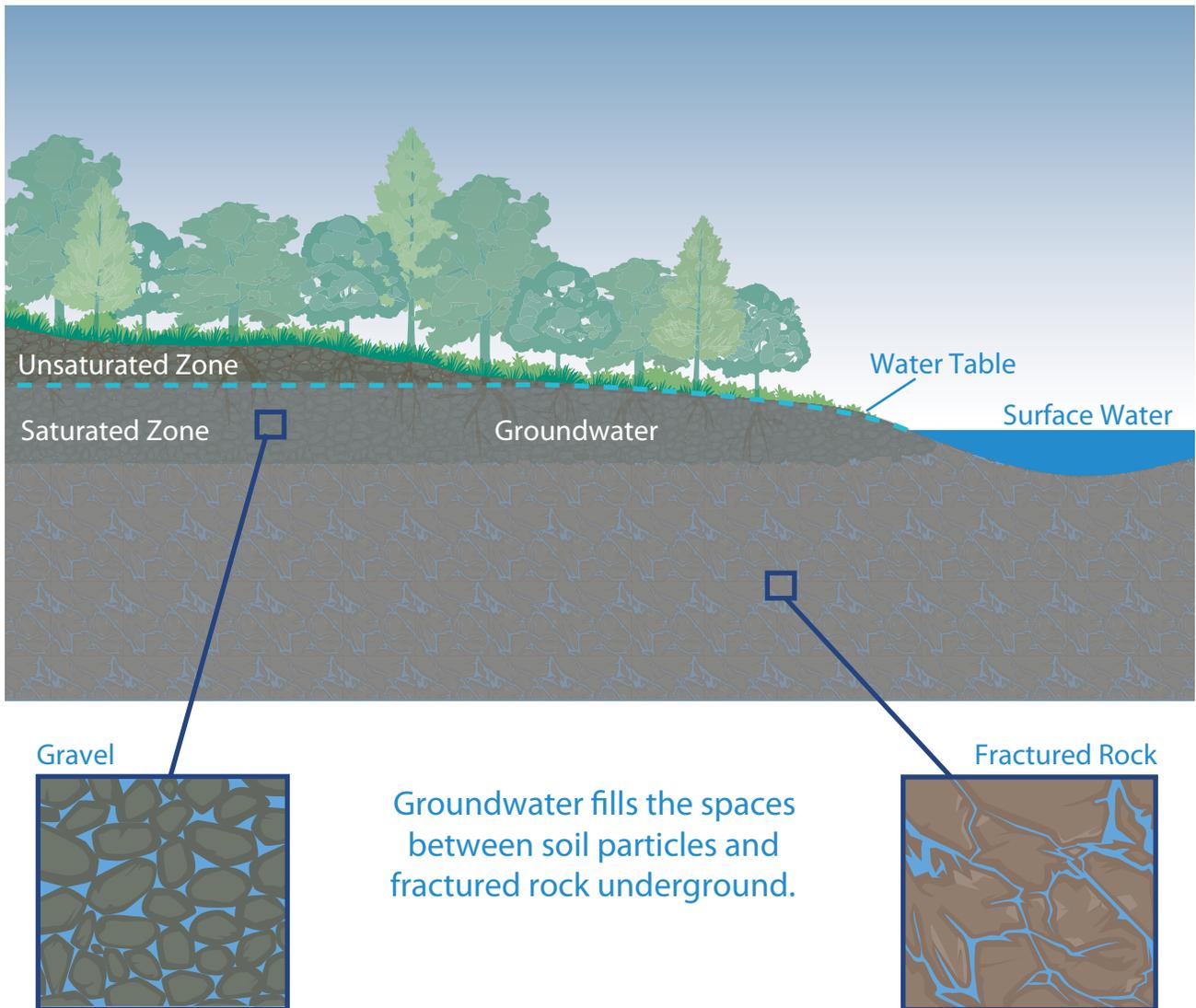
Water cycles from the oceans to the atmosphere to the land and back to the oceans. Once on land, the water may: (1) evaporate from land and re-enter the atmosphere directly, (2) flow into rivers and streams, or (3) seep downward in the soil and become groundwater. Every molecule of water is continuously moving through the hydrologic cycle.

# Groundwater Basics

## What Is Groundwater?

Contrary to what a lot of people think, groundwater is rarely found in underground rivers or lakes in caverns. Instead, groundwater is water that fills the pores of soil, sand, gravel and cracks in rock that lie beneath the surface of the earth – much the way water saturates a sponge. Groundwater occurs in the zone of saturation in the subsurface where the materials are permeable and have connected spaces that allow water to flow through. Groundwater moves through the soil and rock under the forces of gravity, capillary action, pressure and concentration gradients, and eventually makes its way back to rivers, lakes and the oceans.

Figure 2. Groundwater

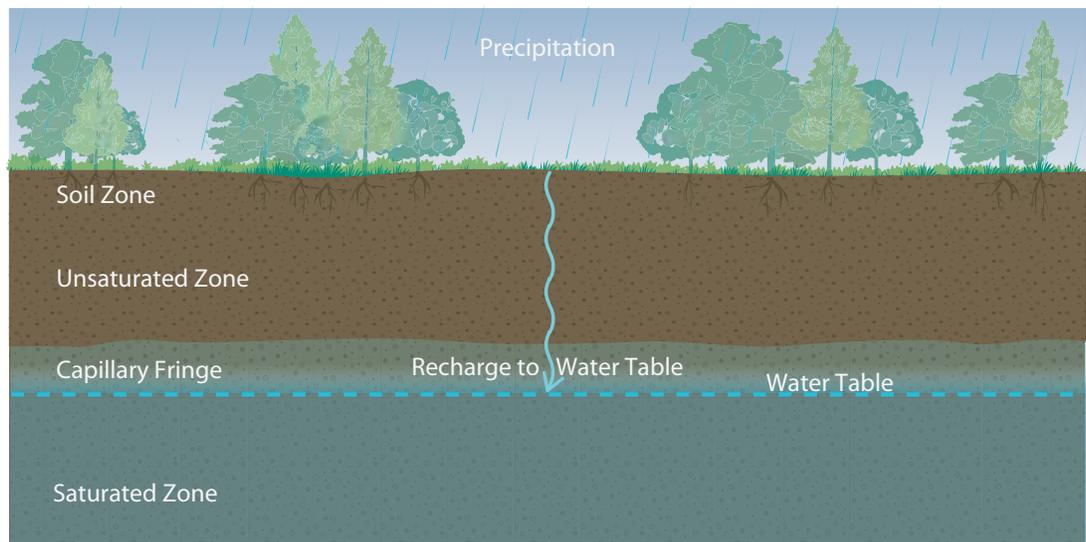


# Groundwater Basics

## Where Does Groundwater Come From?

Groundwater begins as precipitation that falls onto the ground. Some of it runs off the land, evaporates into the atmosphere, or is taken up immediately by plant roots and transpired. The precipitation that soaks into the ground and makes it beyond the root zone is pulled down by gravity until it reaches the water table. Below the water table, all the pore spaces in the soil are filled with water. This is the saturated zone.

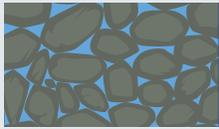
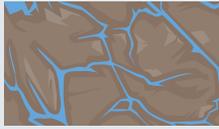
**Figure 3. Recharge to the Water Table**



## How Is Groundwater Stored?

Groundwater is stored in **aquifers**. An aquifer is any soil or rock formation that is capable of yielding usable amounts of water to a water supply well. Connecticut has two main types of aquifers that are capable of supplying water to a drinking water well. These are stratified drift aquifers and bedrock aquifers. Figure 4 summarizes some of the characteristics of these aquifer types.

**Figure 4. Connecticut's Aquifers**

<p><b>Stratified Drift Aquifer</b></p> 	<p>Consists of stratified layers of sand and gravel Most productive aquifers High permeability/moderate porosity Susceptible to pollution</p>
<p><b>Bedrock Aquifer</b></p> 	<p>Water is contained within fractures in the bedrock Generally, least productive aquifers Low permeability/low porosity Can yield sufficient volume of water for a private well</p>

# Groundwater Basics

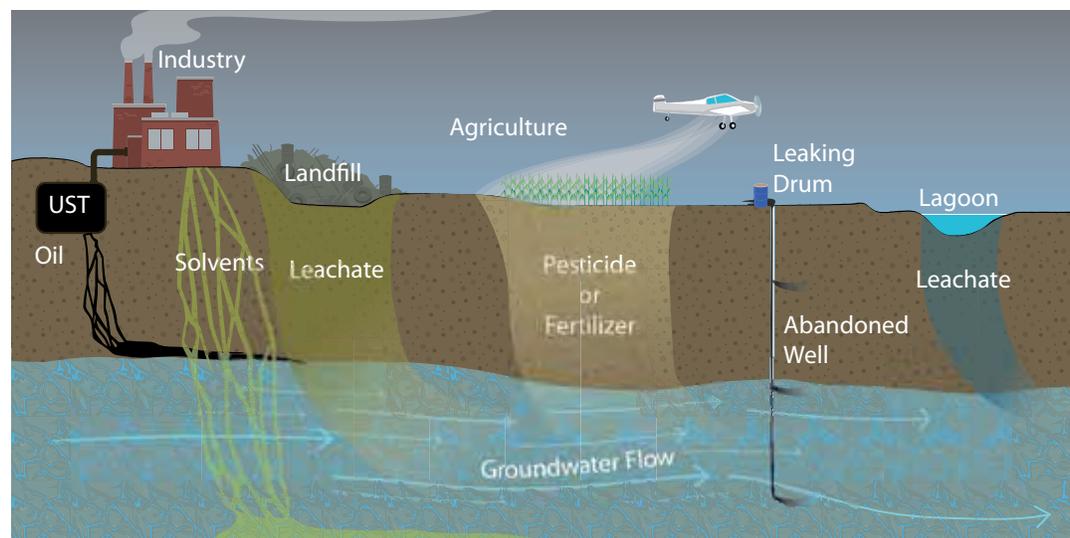
## How Can Groundwater Be Contaminated?

As groundwater infiltrates down to the water table, it can pick up contaminants from the ground surface or underlying soil and move the contaminants through the groundwater system. Even though groundwater travels very slowly, contaminants can be transported great distances from their source. The contaminants can form a concentrated plume that follows the groundwater flow path.

## What Are the Potential Sources of Contamination?

There are many different potential sources of contamination. Any site that has or uses hazardous materials can be considered a potential source. Some of the commonly known sources are landfills, industries, dry cleaners, underground storage tanks (USTs), chemical leaks and spills, improper waste disposal practices, improper pesticide and fertilizer use, and improper storage of road deicing materials.

**Figure 5. Groundwater Contamination**



## What Are The Effects of Groundwater Contamination?

Groundwater contaminated with chemicals, pesticides, gasoline or oil can cause serious human and animal health problems. Those who drink it or come in contact with it can suffer diseases, nervous system disorders, liver or kidney failure, or cancer. Detection and treatment of contaminated water can be very expensive, much more expensive than taking steps to prevent the contamination from occurring in the first place.

## How Is Groundwater Contamination Prevented?

Best management practices can be used to minimize the risk of groundwater contamination. For example, providing secondary containment, using leak detection systems, having an emergency spill response plan and employing waste minimization techniques can lower the risk of contamination. However, siting controls and prohibition of high risk land uses in sensitive areas can be the most effective tool available to reduce the contamination risk.