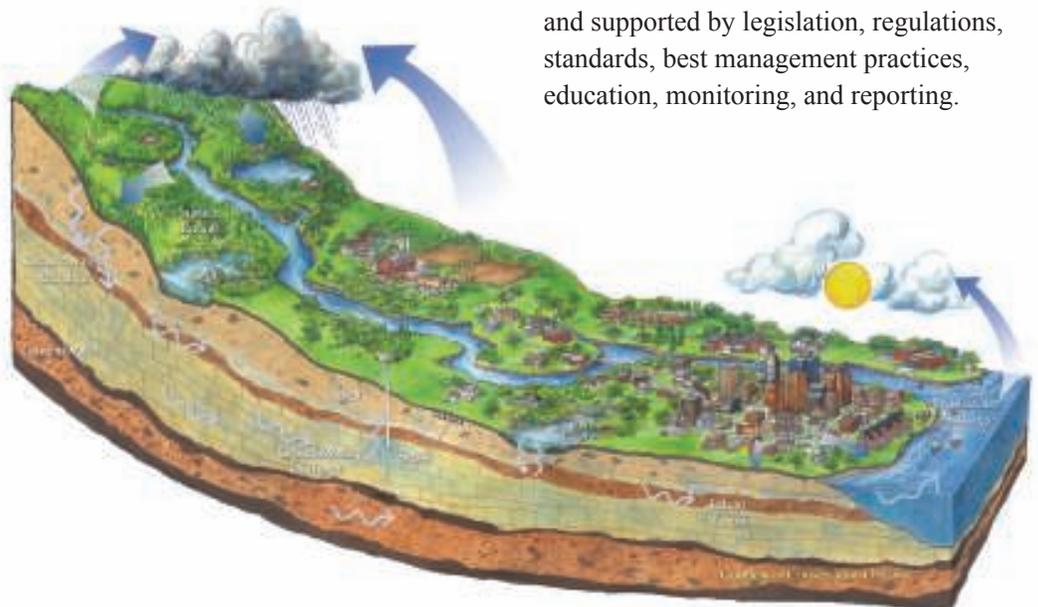


Drinking Water Source Protection

Drinking water source protection is an efficient and practical way to safeguard the quantity and quality of our drinking water. It is a shared responsibility that also provides environmental and economical benefits. Conservation Halton supports Bill 43, the *Clean Water Act*, by the Ministry of Environment. The *Clean Water Act* is an important step towards ensuring safe drinking water for all of Ontario. This act will require communities to look at their drinking water sources, identify potential sources of contaminations, and create and carry out a plan to protect both the quality and quantity of municipal drinking sources.

- The goal of drinking water source protection is to prevent contamination and depletion of current and future supplies from sources such as lakes, rivers, streams, springs, and groundwater.

- Drinking water source protection is the first level in a multi-level approach to protecting drinking water and ensuring watershed health and ecological integrity. It includes safeguarding source and groundwater by developing source protection plans that are watershed-based and supported by legislation, regulations, standards, best management practices, education, monitoring, and reporting.



Summary

Conservation Halton's viewpoint on drinking source water protection details the multi-barrier approach to safeguarding drinking water and the importance of effective planning to look after groundwater, wetlands, and creeks.

- Conservation authorities currently deliver a variety of watershed management programs to improve water quality, reduce flood and erosion damages, provide an adequate water supply, protect natural areas and biodiversity, and provide environmental education of watershed residents. Conservation Halton is structured on a watershed basis, which allows for the coordination of the local delivery of watershed management and source water protection activities.

- The Clean Water Act requires communities to establish Source Protection Committees to examine drinking water sources and identify potential sources of contamination. The Source Protection Committee will be responsible for preparing the terms of reference, assessment report and source protection plan. The source protection plan will represent an agreement among the people and municipalities of a watershed about protecting water quality and quantity.

- Planning for drinking water source protection in the Halton watershed has to be a shared responsibility between the Province of Ontario, Conservation Halton and the watershed's municipalities. Conservation Halton encourages the development for consistent Provincial standards with accessible data and adequate funding.

Conservation Halton is well positioned to coordinate the development of a shared watershed source protection plan. Conservation Halton has already developed several comprehensive watershed plans that include elements of drinking water source protection. The partner municipalities will participate in the plan's development, implementation and monitoring. Farmers and landowners also have to participate to ensure the plan's success.

Integrated Watershed Management

Managing water resources on a watershed basis means taking into consideration everything that influences the sources of our drinking water, whether it is surface or groundwater. Watersheds are areas of land drained by rivers, creeks, or streams that pass through different types of landscapes and come into contact with a variety of human activities. Our actions,

directly and indirectly, affect the health of our watersheds. Our water supply is affected not only by human activities local to the water supply, but from anywhere upstream of the point of taking. Ontario's conservation authorities, with their watershed-based perspective, will help municipalities by gathering and sharing information, facilitating cooperation and coordination among communities and stakeholders, and providing technical support and advice to the Source Protection Committees.



The Walkerton Connection

In May 2000, the drinking water for the town of Walkerton became contaminated with e.coli bacteria. Seven people died and more than 2,300 became ill. The tragedy triggered concerns about the safety of Ontario's drinking water and in response, the Government of Ontario initiated the Walkerton Inquiry. Part one of the inquiry dealt with the circumstance surrounding the special event and part two emphasized the importance of drinking water sources as the first step in a multi-barrier approach for drinking water management. Justice Dennis O'Connor, Commissioner of the Walkerton Inquiry, stated that every watershed in Ontario needs a plan on how to protect its sources of water. Drinking water source protection planning will be a locally and community driven management strategy.

Conservation Halton Natural Champion for a Healthy Watershed



Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores and manages the natural resources in its watershed. Conservation Halton has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors that includes municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science based programs and services.

For more information about Drinking Water Source Protection contact Conservation Halton:
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