Drinking water source protection is simply protecting water resources, such as lakes, rivers and groundwater, from contamination or overuse. Water is critical to all aspects of our lives. Protecting the sources of our water is important to ensure that there is enough safe water for all our uses - now and in the future.

The Clean Water Act, 2006, and its regulations lay out how source protection plans will be done. A technical team is currently working to gather data about the watersheds for the three partner agencies in this region: Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (lead); Grey Sauble Conservation Authority; Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula.

What are some water sources?
- Our water comes from two major sources: surface water and groundwater. Surface water includes lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands. Groundwater includes underground aquifers.
- Groundwater and surface water are interconnected, flowing from one to the other.

Why protect sources of drinking water if we can just treat the water before it gets to our taps?
- We need to protect the sources of our water in order to safeguard the public health of our residents and ensure there is enough water for all.
- Over two million residents in Ontario get their water directly from surface or groundwater sources and do not have access to treatment systems.
- Treating water for drinking is very costly. As well, conventional water treatment methods cannot always remove many hazardous chemicals.

Don't we have an unlimited supply of fresh water in Canada?
- We do not have an infinite supply of water on our planet. Most of the water we use is recycled through the natural water cycle. It falls to earth as precipitation, is absorbed by plants and soil and then evaporates back into the atmosphere where the cycle begins again. Some of the water we use is thousands of years old.
- Our supply of groundwater can be depleted if water is taken out of the ground more quickly than it can become naturally recharged.

What is the best way to protect source water?
- We protect sources of water by managing the human and natural influences on them. The less contamination or overuse of our water resources, the more we will have now and in the future.
- Water flows within watersheds, therefore it is best to manage our water resources on a watershed basis.
- As water flows across the watershed, it crosses forests, farmlands, towns and cities. Along the way it is affected by different activities.
- The fewer negative impacts on our sources of water throughout the watershed, the better the chance that the water coming out of our taps will be healthy. Protecting our sources of drinking water is absolutely essential to our health.

How do we make sure our drinking water is safe now?
- A number of actions are being taken to prevent our water from becoming contaminated plus to ensure that it is safe and clean from source to tap.
- These include: protecting sources of water (monitoring and managing our lakes, rivers and streams); using up-to-date water treatment systems; ensuring that the pipes, watermains and storage towers are in good repair; water testing; and well trained water managers.
How are our sources of water threatened?

- Both the quality and quantity of water can be threatened by different activities, such as:
  - Natural contaminants
  - Irresponsible land use activities which contaminate our water or take too much out.
  - Urban development that can make it difficult for water to filter into the ground in order to replenish groundwater sources.
  - Air pollution from vehicles, industries and other sources that falls directly on surface waters or enters water sources through surface runoff.
  - As a result of climate change. There is concern that the warming of the Earth’s atmosphere will reduce the amount of water available in lakes, rivers and streams due to reduced precipitation and increased evaporation.

What is a source protection plan?

- A source protection plan is a management strategy designed to minimize the impact that human and natural activities have on the quality and supply of our water resources.
- Source protection plans: include physical information about our watersheds; identify sensitive areas where water resource supply and/or quality is threatened; provide scientific data about the quality and supply of current water resources; and include up to date mapping, computer projections about future water resources and recommendations to manage the impacts of harmful activities.
- These source protection plans will take up to five years to put in place and will be developed with public participation.

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