



## WATER WELL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR WELL DECOMMISSIONING AND WELLHEAD PROTECTION

### Background:

Most rural Ontarians rely on groundwater from dug or drilled wells for their private water supply. There are different types of wells including those which have been dug, bored, and drilled. Wells that are older, no longer used, or that have not been maintained properly are direct pathways to groundwater aquifers. Therefore, there is potential for a direct risk to sources of drinking water. Improperly abandoned wells can also increase the risk of contamination entering nearby wells and provide a way for contaminants to reach deeper aquifers. In Ontario, if a well is not being used or maintained for future use as a well, then the owner is legally required under R.R.O 1990, Regulation 903: WELLS of the *Ontario Water Resources Act* to plug and seal the well.

Decommissioning or upgrading such wells will reduce the risk of contamination to local aquifers and drinking water sources. Damaged or poorly maintained drinking water wells must be maintained to prevent groundwater contamination, as they also pose a threat to personal and public health.

The design of the Program will provide for increased funding to decommission and upgrade private wells located within the wellhead protection areas (WHPA) identified in the Saugeen – Grey Sauble – Northern Bruce Peninsula Source Protection Plan, where significant drinking water threats could occur.

By participating in the Water Well Improvement Program (WWIP), you do your part by protecting watershed aquifers including municipal groundwater, and surface water sources through repairing, upgrading, or decommissioning a well.

### 1.0 Structure of Financing:

The purpose of this pilot program is to provide incentive funding for Saugeen Conservation watershed landowner for the decommissioning or upgrading of wellhead for the protection of drinking water systems and our groundwater aquifers.

For farm properties, the completion of an Environmental Farm Plan is required prior to grant/incentive payment. Maximum grants and grant rates vary between types of projects and proximity to Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA's) as outlined in the project guidelines. WWIP grants may be combined (stacked) with funding from other sources such as other County programs. Grants are not to exceed 100% of total expenses. Applicants must inform WWIP staff of additional cost share funding.

## 2.0 Eligibility:

1. A grant to implement all or some of the well head protection and well decommissioning related project as part of the WWIP program may be paid to an individual applicant who:
  - is a resident of Ontario
  - is a registered owner of property in the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority's watershed.
  - for farm properties, the completion of an Environmental Farm Plan is required.
  - is undertaking the project voluntarily
  - if your project is on rented/leased land, you will need to submit a letter from the property owner with your application form indicating that the owner approves of the proposed project.
2. The project must be located in Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority watershed and protect and/or improve surface or ground water quality in SVCA watershed.
3. The following costs are generally eligible for grant assistance:
  - required permits
  - purchased materials and supplies
  - professional fees
  - contractor fees
  - fees for design, construction, and supervision.

**The labour and machinery use of the applicant, family dependents and the applicant's business are not eligible.**

4. Performance incentives are paid after staff confirms that the project is managed according to program guidelines.
5. All approvals and permits are the responsibility of the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all legal requirements including but not limited to:
  - municipal bylaws
  - provincial and regional highway setbacks
  - Drainage Act
  - Federal and Provincial Acts
  - Canada Farm Building Code
  - Ontario Building Code
  - Planning and regulations of local conservation authority

### 3.0 Limitations to Grant Eligibility:

1. Grants are limited to eligible landowners and municipalities with properties in the SVCA watershed that have the potential to significantly improve water quality.
2. An application for funding to decommission or upgrade a well can be made retroactively for an eligible project completed after June 1, 2020 and before December 31, 2021; and, where funding is available.
3. Grants are limited to projects that will improve and protect water quality through well decommissioning and wellhead protection projects in compliance with under R.R.O 1990, Regulation 903: WELLS of the *Ontario Water Resources Act*.
4. An applicant must specify the program year in which the project will be completed. If the project cannot be completed within the specified year and prior to December 31, 2021, the grant will not be paid. However, the applicant may request an extension from the WWIP program, pending circumstances.
5. Funds will be allocated on a first come first serve basis, however, project that are located within a Municipal drinking water wellhead projection area will take priority. As such, those projects with the higher potential for improving water quality and protect Municipal drinking water aquifers will be considered first.
6. Grant will not be paid on HST if the applicant is entitled to a HST rebate.
7. The WWIP has funding till the end of 2021. Additional funding will be sought to support this program beyond that, but there is no guarantee that it will continue past Dec. 31, 2021. Funds may be limited based on this deadline.

#### **4.0 How to Apply**

1. For farm applicants/landowners need to complete an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). The EFP is delivered locally by Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association in partnership with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Visit [www.ontariosoilcrop.org](http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org) or call 1-800-265-9751 for more information. Submit your EFP for confidential review to the EFP workshop Leader. The plan remains confidential and will not be shared with Saugeen Watershed Improvement program staff. Completion of an EFP is required prior to grant/incentive payment.
2. Contact the Water Well Improvement Program (WWIP) at the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (519-367-3040 or [stewardship@svca.on.ca](mailto:stewardship@svca.on.ca)) to verify that your proposed project meets the guidelines and to arrange a site visit. WWIP staff is available to assist you with planning your project and applying to the program.
3. Submit the application to the WWIP for review. Staff will evaluate the project on its potential to protect and improve water quality.
4. Once the project proposal has been reviewed and approved, WWIP staff will notify you of the decision and you can proceed with the project.
5. When the project is completed, paid for, and you have copies of all required paperwork specified in your approval letter, notify WWIP staff. A site inspection is required to confirm that the project is complete. At that time, you can submit invoices marked paid and a copy of cancelled cheques or bank statement for all eligible project expenses to staff. You will also be required to sign an Expense Claim form.
6. Upon review of the information submitted and deemed satisfactory by WWIP staff, your cost-share or incentive payment will be sent to you in a timely fashion (within 4 weeks).

#### **Water Well Improvement Program Contact Information:**

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