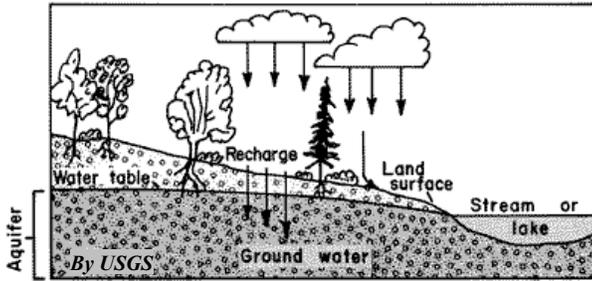


Groundwater Protection Efforts in Northfield

Questions and Answers



The Tri-Town Aquifer Committee has been asked to assist in answering questions that might arise concerning the amended **Groundwater Protection Ordinance** for Northfield. The proposed amendments are similar to the existing ordinance in Belmont, which has been well received by the town and business community. If you have questions about the Tri-Town Aquifer Project you can contact the Lakes Regional Planning Commission at 279-8171. For questions regarding the ordinance, please contact the Northfield Land Use Office at 286-7039.

Specifically:

- What is an aquifer?
- What is a stratified drift aquifer?
- Why are aquifers important?
- What are some of the dangers to an aquifer?
- How can we protect our aquifer?
- What would this protection cost the taxpayer and/or business owner?

What is an aquifer? An aquifer is a geologic formation composed of rock, sand, or gravel that contains significant amounts of potentially recoverable water. A well is drilled into the ground to penetrate an aquifer, and water is then pumped up to the surface for consumption.

What is a stratified drift aquifer? A stratified drift aquifer is a geologic formation of predominantly well-sorted sediment deposited by or in bodies of glacial meltwater, including gravel, sand silt, or clay which contains sufficient saturated permeable material to yield significant quantities of water to wells. The **Groundwater Protection Ordinance** applies only to the stratified drift aquifers and the related municipal wellhead protection area. An updated map of these areas will be adopted with the ordinance and is available for review from the town. Please contact the Northfield Land Use Office.

Why are aquifers important? An aquifer acts as a natural filter. As water flows through it, sediment and other particles (like bacteria) are trapped and the water is purified naturally. Northfield's municipal water supply is pumped directly from the aquifer to schools, businesses, churches, private homes and apartments. Many other public water systems and private wells also pump water directly from the aquifer.

What are some of the dangers to an aquifer? As Northfield grows, certain "higher risk" land use activities can increase the potential for contaminating the aquifer. As these activities increase over an aquifer, contamination from things such as, landfills, storm drains, fertilizers, agrichemicals, and spills of petroleum products, paints, or thinners can all have a detrimental effect on the water quality. The more activity, the more chances there are for unintentional contamination.

How can we protect our aquifer? We can continue protecting our aquifer by prohibiting a few new land uses that present the greatest threat to the aquifer, and requiring those certain land uses that continuously use gas, oil, solvents or other harmful substances to follow Best Management Practices, and by providing greater education to residents about protecting water resources. BMP's are common-sense practices, like making sure containers that hold gas or oil are covered when not in use, that reduce the potential for spills and contamination of groundwater or water supplies. NH Department of Environmental Services reports that it spends approximately \$400,000 per month cleaning up sites where gasoline has been released and contaminated groundwater.

What would this protection cost the taxpayer and/or business owner? The ordinance would be administered by the current Land Use Office and Code Enforcement Officer as part of the position's regular duties and, therefore, will result in no additional cost to the taxpayer. In situations that are especially complex, we may request the assistance of NH Dept. of Environmental Services or for new uses may charge the business a fee for an outside consultant, but those instances will not be the rule.