MINNESOTA WELLHEAD PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Wellhead Protection program goes beyond federal planning mandates and requires all communities who rely on groundwater for their public water supply to create dedicated wellhead protection plans.

MDH’s program builds off federal Safe Drinking Water Act requirements for all states to have a wellhead protection program, and for all public water supplies to assess risks to sources of drinking water. Under these laws there is no requirement for individual public water supplies to take full advantage of state programs, or to take concrete steps to mitigate the risks identified by the assessments. Minnesota addresses these federal policy gaps through their Administrative Rule 4720.5130 that requires the development of a wellhead protection plan for all new wells serving municipal public water systems within two years of a well’s completion. This rule also requires existing wells to be phased into the program with priority given to the most vulnerable public supplies.

Source water protection planning requirements and the amount of assistance provided by MDH is determined by considering several factors including population served, regulatory protections in place, natural protections offered by the geology and soils, and the size and type of the source of supply. This tailored design strategy is intended to ensure that source water plans are both implementable and meaningful for all communities. All wellhead protection plans are prepared under a formal process that includes an opportunity for the public to comment prior to MDH review. More information about the basic requirements of developing and implementing a wellhead protection plan and options for communities to receive financial support through Minnesota’s Clean Water Fund can be found on sub-pages of the MDH website.

To further promote this program, MDH partners with the Minnesota Rural Water Association each year to formally recognize public water suppliers who demonstrate outstanding commitment to protecting their drinking water source with a Source Water Protection Award. The winner and finalists are announced at the Minnesota Rural Water Conference in March and are presented a Governor-signed certificate in their hometowns. Examples of previous winners and finalists are listed online to highlight their work, inspire other communities and help create a professional network to share lessons learned.
The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) invests millions of dollars each year into running and improving the Wellhead Protection program. This money goes toward maintaining and improving the program, supporting staff that can provide technical assistance to public water supplies engaged in source water protection planning, and providing direct financial assistance to communities to implement their plans. The Minnesota FY2018-2019 Proposed Biennial Operating Budget recommends Clean Water Fund allocations of approximately $2.5 million and $3 million for source water protection activities in FY2018 and FY2019, respectively. Of the requested appropriation, $617,000 in FY2018 and $950,000 in FY2019 are for grants to local public water systems to advance source water protection efforts. This report also stresses the need to expand the program to have greater inclusion of communities who rely on surface water systems. Additional funding for source water protection also comes from State Government Special Revenue and federal allocations from the Safe Drinking Water Act.

**TYPE**

**Investment**

**ISSUE**

**Source Water**