

Water Supply Protection Overlay Districts

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF A WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT?

Protecting the quality and quantity of clean drinking water is important to all communities. Many different methods of protecting and conserving clean drinking water have been used since the earliest days of civilization. Today many communities throughout New England create Water Supply Protection Overlay Districts to identify water resources and the areas draining to those resources and regulate land use activities within those districts for the protection of the water supply.

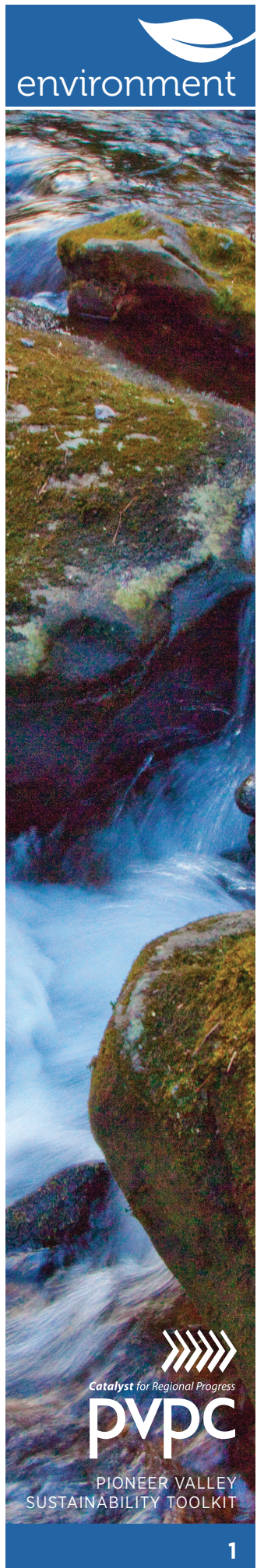
WHY DO WE NEED A WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT?

Controlling land uses in areas that could impact water supplies can prevent contamination and overuse. Clean water is essential for our health and survival. Protecting this valuable resource is a best practice.

HOW DOES A WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT WORK?

To create a Water Supply Protection District, cities and towns must first identify water resources throughout their town, including all past, present and future possible sources of drinking water from both above-ground and below-ground sources. Once these sources are identified, the watersheds from which these sources are recharged are determined (water sources are recharged by all rainwater and snowmelt that falls within the watershed above the source and flows downhill to the water source). Mapping water supply sources and their watersheds can be done by drawing sources on a copy of a town map or by using a geographic information system. Maps of both surface water and potential groundwater sources from underground aquifers throughout New England are available from the United States Geological Survey.

Exact locations of large public water supplies should be distributed only to those who need the information. Having exact locations widely known and available may be a threat to the public water supply.



HOW CAN THE WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT PROTECT OUR DRINKING WATER?

Once the boundaries of the water supply district are determined, cities and towns will then decide what protection and conservation measures should be put in place in these districts. Some examples might include limiting high-risk uses in the district such as heavy industry, restrictions or control of substances that could contaminate drinking water, requiring buffers or setbacks from wells, wetlands and other surface waters in the district, or requiring or encouraging low-impact or no-impact stormwater management systems of any projects or improvements that are proposed in the district. Low-impact stormwater management can be addressed through the use of the water supply district and the implementation of a site-plan review process for developments.

Some communities have chosen to use both regulations and incentives in water conservation districts. Regulations determine what may and may not be done in a certain area. Incentives provide for credits or rebates for using low-impact development techniques (LIDs) and best-management practices (BMPs).

HOW AND WHERE ARE WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICTS WORKING?

A few towns have water supply protection districts including Exeter and Newmarket, New Hampshire. You can view these ordinances on-line at

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/dwspp/ordinance_zoning.htm

The NH Office of Energy and Planning and the Department of Environmental Services work cooperatively in providing guidance for water supply protection in New Hampshire. In Vermont, it is the Agency of Natural Resources at <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/DEC/watersup/swapp.htm>. In Massachusetts, it is the Department of Environmental Protection.



REFERENCES

NH DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INNOVATIVE LAND USE PLANNING GUIDE:

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/repp/documents/ilupt_chpt_2.5.pdf

EPA MODEL SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER PROTECTION ORDINANCES:

US EPA -

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/ordinance/osm7.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/ordinance/mol7.htm>

THE STORMWATER CENTER, MODEL ORDINANCE FOR
AQUIFER PROTECTION DISTRICT:

http://www.stormwatercenter.net/Model%20Ordinances/Source_Water_Protection/Aquifer%20district%20ordinance.htm

MASSACHUSETTS MODEL GROUNDWATER ORDINANCE:

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/modgwpd.pdf>

TOWN OF GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS, WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY
DISTRICT ORDINANCE:

http://www.town.grafton.ma.us/Public_Documents/GraftonMA_Planning/Documents/ZBL/Grafton%20ZBL%202008%20Section%207.pdf

MAP SAMPLE, WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION OVERLAY:

http://www.southhadley.org/Pages/SouthHadleyMA_Planning/maps/ZoningMap.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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