

Municipal Newsletter

May 2024

This is the May 2024 municipal update about the work we do, in partnership with you, to protect municipal drinking water sources in Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield source protection areas.

Contents:

1. Source Protection Plans updated
2. Annual Progress Report prepared for year 2023
3. Passing of Source Protection Committee member Bert Dykstra
4. Water Wise Water Sampling and Testing Events Promoting Best Practices for Wells and Septic Systems
5. Source Protection Committee champions water testing
6. Public outreach through videos, local media, and social media
7. Call for applications for Source Protection Committee member

1. Source Protection Plans updated

The Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley (ABMV) Source Protection Committee (SPC) has developed two separate updates to the source protection plans to better protect sources of drinking water.

a. The broad update submitted to the Province of Ontario in 2023 was approved by the Province March 26, 2024. Approval of the amendment is posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

(<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-8314>) Key changes include:

- New and revised policies to align with the 2021 provincial *Technical Rules* (under the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006*), and to address policy implementation challenges.
- Revised wellhead protection areas for Belgrave, plus minor changes to Auburn, Palmerston and Wingham wellhead protection areas.
- Updated SGRA – Significant Groundwater Recharge Area – to align with updated provincial *Technical Rules*.

b. A separate update, to incorporate changes to the Lucknow and Century Heights drinking water systems, was submitted to the Province April 4, 2024. Approval is pending.

Thanks to all our local municipalities for their input on the proposed changes.

About Us

Source Protection Committee

- 12 members plus a Chair
- Represents local municipalities; economic sectors; and Other/Public

Source Protection Plans (SPP)

- Developed locally
- Approved by Province in 2015
- Updates approved in 2024
- Policies to protect municipal sources of drinking water
- Area covered – Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection areas

Goal: To protect region's municipal sources of drinking water – aquifers and lakes – from contamination and overuse

2. Annual Progress Report prepared for year 2023

Our source protection region recently completed its seventh Annual Progress Report for drinking water source protection in the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley areas. This was for the 2023 reporting period and it is available on our [local source protection website](#).

The annual progress report outlines the progress made in implementing the source protection plans (SPPs) for the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection areas, as required by the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006*.

The Source Protection Committee (SPC) reviewed the recent implementation results, noting that significant progress has been made since the SPPs came into effect in 2015. All of the policies in the SPPs are implemented, in progress or require no further action. In addition, 100 per cent of significant drinking water threats have been addressed. The SPC is pleased to see that the objectives of the *Clean Water Act* are being achieved.

The Committee would like to acknowledge the local municipalities, stakeholders and landowners for their ongoing efforts to protect our sources of drinking water. The great progress made to date on SPP implementation would not have been possible without their strong support.

3. Passing of Source Protection Committee member

Bert Dykstra

“Many of us have had the pleasure of working with Bert on various committees and through local politics,” said Matt Pearson, Chair of the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee. “He was a past member of the Central Huron Council for two decades and a past Warden of Huron County. As the Chair of the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee for three years he was quite proud of their achievements.”



More details are in the [note of condolence](#) on our source protection website. Chair Matt remembered Bert as a friendly and helpful person. “Bert’s smile walked into the room before he did,” Matt said. Bert was featured in a video (<https://youtu.be/Jf2ZdSBMZjk?t=191>) we prepared encouraging the use of online mapping apps to help protect municipal drinking water sources.

4. Water Wise Water Sampling and Testing Events Promoting Best Practices for Wells and Septic Systems

Property owners know that testing their well water is important but it isn’t always as convenient as it could be. In 2023 and early 2024, source protection staff, with assistance from Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), organized several *Water Wise* water sampling and testing events in partnership with local community and service groups. The goal was to make enable well water testing by providing a drop-off point for residents in their community. Participating community groups included the Ashfield-Colborne Lakefront Association; Goderich, Dublin, Monkton and Londesboro Lions Clubs; and the Kirkton-Woodham Optimists. Community volunteers with these groups assisted with distributing water sampling bottles, signage, promotions, staffing and event locations. During the six events, more than 300 residents brought in their well water samples.

At these events, private well owners also received information about protecting and maintaining their wells and septic systems, how to interpret their water sample results and they could ask experts specific questions about their own systems. Provincial funding for this pilot project was provided to promote Ontario's Best Practices for non-municipal water (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/best-practices-source-water-protection>). The message to the public, at these events, was to **Test, Protect and Maintain**: test your well water; protect your well water; and maintain your well and septic system.

(Below are images of some of the local media coverage of the Water Wise events).



5. Source Protection Committee champions water testing

At the January 31, 2024 Source Protection Committee meeting a motion was passed to send a letter to the provincial ministers of Agriculture; Health; and Environment, Conservation and Parks regarding the committee's concern about a recommended phase-out of free private drinking water testing in the December 2023 Auditor General's report. This letter was also circulated to all municipalities in the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region as well as other source protection regions in Ontario. Many municipalities and other source protection committees provided letters of support in response to this letter.

The letter garnered a great deal of interest and media response. Chair Matt Person was interviewed by several media regarding concerns raised about the proposed phase-out of free water testing for private wells. In April 2024 Minister Jones responded to the Ontario Legislature with assurances that free well-water testing for rural households will continue. (<https://www.owensoundsuntimes.com/news/local-news/ontario-health-minister-vows-not-to-end-free-private-well-water-tests>)

6. Public outreach through videos, local media, and social media

The Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region reaches out directly to the public in person, at events, and by phone. Source protection staff also educate and engage the public through local media, websites, and social media including videos.

Every current member of our source protection committee has appeared in one of our source protection [public information videos](#). There are 12 videos in total and they have received more than 35,000 views by members of the public.

Since April of 2023, we have added four new videos to our video series:

- [The Worth of Water](#): Why it's so important for businesses to protect drinking water sources, with Philip Keightley, M.Sc., P. Eng., commercial representative on the SPC.
- [Your Well, Your Responsibility](#) – Tips to keep your well water safe and clean, with Doug Hocking, property owner representative on the SPC.
- [Water Wise Well Water Testing Event along Lake Huron shoreline](#), with John Thompson, municipal representative on the SPC.
- [Be Part of the Water Team](#), with Paul Heffer, municipal representative on the SPC.

In addition to the video series, we have shared **#WaterWednesdays** public information and education posts, about drinking water source protection, on four social media platforms.

(In photos below, left to right, committee members Philip Keightley; Doug Hocking; John Thompson; and Paul Heffer in videos helping to educate the public).



6. Call for applications for Source Protection Committee member

On June 6, 2024, our source protection region will be issuing a call for applications for an agricultural representative on the ABMV Source Protection Committee.

For full posting and details, visit: www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca in early June.

To learn more call 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

To find out more visit the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee web page (<https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca/the-committee/>) on the local source protection region website at <https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca>

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region
 c/o Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
 71108 Morrison Line, R.R. 3
 Exeter, ON N0M 1S5

Tel 519-235-2610
 Toll-free 1-888-286-2610
www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca

This project has received funding support from the Government of Ontario.
 Such support does not indicate endorsement of the contents of this material.