

# SOURCE WATER AND THE WQIP GRANT

By Mary Theresa Julien

Before our drinking water gets to the water plant, there are things that we can do to protect the source. Source water is generally either groundwater or surface water such as a lake or river. We may not give it much thought, but how we steward our land can absolutely impact our aquifer, spring, lake, and stream water sources. New York Rural Water Association's (NYRWA's) Source Water Protection Program works with communities to help identify and mitigate potential or existing source water contamination, in part through a land-based approach.

When a community works with NYRWA to develop a Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP), we gain a broader understanding of where its source water comes from. In the case of an aquifer for instance, we would map the location of the aquifer and the critical land areas above and around it which contribute to its recharge. A SWPP develops voluntary steps that a community can take to extend protection to these areas. A community may want to consider land acquisition or conservation easements above the aquifer and its zone of contribution as a means of protecting its source water. This is, in part, the idea behind Appendix 5D of the State Sanitary Code Part 5, Subpart 5-1 for public water systems which requires ownership within 100' of the well and control of land use activities within 200' of the well. Since the safety of drinking water has the potential to be negatively impacted throughout the source water area, it makes sense to extend the protection area where possible.

Part of the technical assistance provided through the Source Water Protection Program involves helping connect communities to available funding sources. The mix of water quality and quantity concerns is different in every community, but if a community identifies land acquisition as a SWPP implementation step, we would then look at the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program. WQIP is a competitive reimbursement grant program with a 25% match. Land Acquisition is one of several WQIP project types considered to address water quality concerns and these can be included in SWPP implementation. WQIP eligible project types include:

- 💧 **Wastewater Treatment Improvement**
- 💧 **Nonagricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control**
- 💧 **Vacuum Trucks in Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Areas**
- 💧 **Land Acquisition for Source Water Protection**
- 💧 **Salt Storage**
- 💧 **Dam Safety Repair/Rehabilitation**
- 💧 **Aquatic Connectivity Restoration**
- 💧 **Marine District Habitat Restoration**

Communities can apply for a WQIP grant through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process. More information on CFA can be found here: <https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>



Protection Program (DWSP2) in collaboration with NYRWA. NYRWA's Source Water Protection Specialist is a Technical Assistance Provider for the NYS DWSP2. This means that if a community has developed a SWPP with NYRWA, and it wants to apply for DWSP2 approval as a part of the SWPP implementation, we can facilitate this process. There is an advantage to this approach if a community is also applying for a WQIP grant, having a NYS approved DWSP2 in place scores more points in the CFA/WQIP application review process.

We know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Having a plan to protect source water resources makes fiscal sense since proactive stewardship can prevent contamination expenditures. Developing a SWPP is a valuable way for a community to protect its drinking water source, now and for future generations. Please feel free to reach out if you are interested in developing a Source Water Protection Plan for your community. I can be reached at 518-828-3155 ext. 170. We are here to help. Cheers! 💧💧

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