

ND well zones revealed

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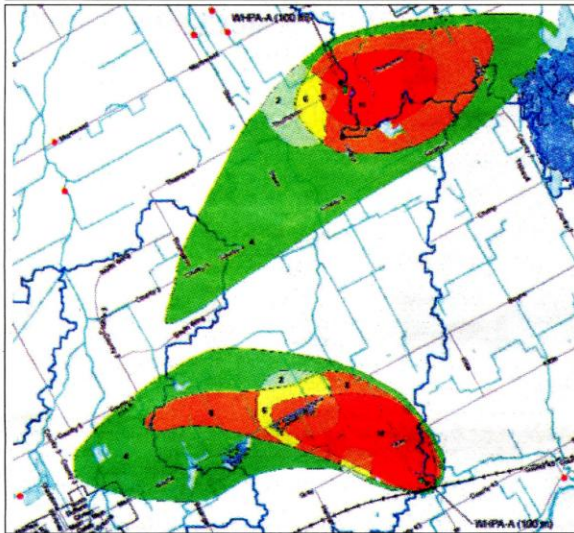
WINCHESTER — After years of anticipation, drinking water protection zones around the municipal wells in North Dundas Township have been drawn up and are being shown to the public — but the regulatory impact on farmers and others with land inside the new boundaries — if any — remains to be seen.

Hydrogeologist Nell Van Walsum of WESA Consulting Ltd. has overseen recent technical studies establishing the new municipal wellhead protection zones on behalf of the regional Water Source Protection Committee. Van Walsum presented her data April 27 to North Dundas Council, dealing with the township's communal wells at five sites — Maple Ridge, Thompson Rd. (near Morewood), St. Lawrence St. (in Winchester), County Rd. 31 (north of Winchester) and Spruit Rd. (northwest of Winchester).

The newly drawn-up zones will go into a planned regional "assessment report" to be completed by the end of this year. That report will, in turn, inform the eventual creation of a regional "water source protection plan" that could result in possible new restrictions on land uses inside the boundaries of the new wellhead protection zones.

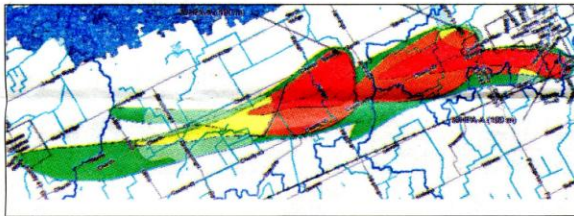
The work has been carried out in accordance with the province's

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Draft wellhead protection areas

The image above depicts the draft wellhead protection zones now identified around Chesterville's Maple Ridge well emplacement (lower blob) and Winchester's well emplacement off Thompson Rd. (upper blob) near Morewood. The individual colours delineate large specific areas of risk based upon groundwater water flows and soil types: Red is assigned a "vulnerability risk" of 10, orange is an 8, yellow is a 6, green is a 4, and light green is a 2. The same applies to the bottom image depicting the draft wellhead protection zones emanating from Winchester's other wells at St. Lawrence St., County Rd. 31 and Spruit Rd. Notice how the tail end of the vulnerability area from the Spruit Rd. facility stretches almost to Hallville.



Wellhead zones

Continued from the front
Clean Water Act.

However, Karen Cooper, communications specialist with the Raisin-South Nation Drinking Water Source Protection Program, explained later that any new rules or regulations affecting landowners inside the zones are still some time away from being developed.

"They haven't gone there yet," said Cooper, adding the creation of any new rules would be "a consultative process." She noted that the water source protection committee "is especially well represented by the agricultural community" and includes four or five farmers. "It's very grass roots. The province has given the committee a lot of leeway, and here, agriculture is number one."

"The whole objective is to look at the source and see how we can protect that water," Van Walsum told council.

To determine a given well's vulnerability, the researchers calculated the amount of time it takes water dropped on the ground's surface to arrive at the well — based on two-year, five-year

and 25-year benchmarks. Taking into account the topography of the land, soil types, and the movement of groundwater and underwater streams, these appear as concentric, oblong rings around each of the wells, together forming the wellhead protection zones.

Additional data was incorporated into the zones to more specifically predict the highest to lowest risk areas, indicated with a series of colours on the maps.

Winchester wells 1, 5 and 6 (St. Lawrence St., County Rd. 31 and Spruit Rd., respectively) are notable for having wellhead protection areas with particularly distended, stretched-out shapes — reaching almost to Hallville in one instance.

Van Walsum explained that a wellhead may be downstream of an underground water source that flows relatively quickly, resulting in the lopsided, oblong effect.

Potential sources of contamination within the protection zones include septic systems, the spreading of biosolids, crop farming, cattle

ranching, road salt storage, animal feed lots, transportation corridors, automotive repair facilities and more, council heard. "These are all potential activities that could lead to an impact on ground water quality," she said.

She was asked about her assertion that responsibility for implementing the region's Water Source Protection Plan will ultimately fall to municipalities.

"My question in that case is: Who pays?" said Deputy Mayor Estella Rose.

Mayor Alvin Runnalls expressed some relief the visitor did not come to the council table with "bad news saying farmers would have to stop what they're doing."

Striking a familiar theme that he's raised on more than one occasion, Runnalls pointed out that North Dundas has already proven that farming and municipal wells can co-exist without additional regulation. For the past 12 years, the mayor noted, the township has specially monitored the water from Winchester well emplacement no. 7 — the village's top producer, which is surrounded by active farm fields — and has always come up with clean results.

May 18 session on abandoned wells

FINCH — In Ontario, hundreds of thousands of abandoned wells dot the landscape — a potential contamination threat to drinking water supplies.

To help local property owners deal with the issue, North Stormont Township, the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region and the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program are hosting a Water Well Information Session next Tuesday, May 18, at South Nation Conservation headquarters, 38 Victoria St., Finch.

Billed as a "one-stop opportunity" to get answers on the topic, the 8 p.m. session will also disseminate grant information and applications for eligible landowners.

Ontario Ministry of the Environment Water Well Specialist Kim Yee will deliver a presentation on methods for tackling abandoned wells.