

Abandoned Wells

Wells

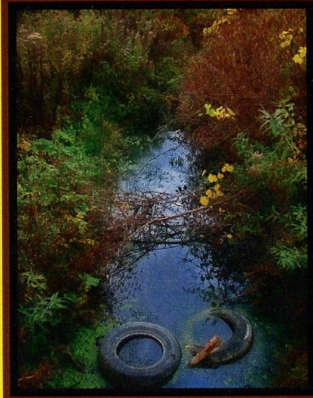
An
Unnecessary
Risk



SPRING 2010

The Problem

Abandoned wells, illegal dumping, and irresponsible handling of waste products pose a potential safety, health, and environmental threat.



Illegal dumping could contaminate streams.

The Solution

Recognize: Identify abandoned wells and dump sites on your property.

Report: To your local water district or Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Decommission: Use a certified well driller to plug the well or landowner's may plug the well following the rules summarized by Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Wells and Cisterns

Abandoned wells and cisterns can pose serious threats to groundwater quality and human safety. Many well and cistern covers were constructed from wood which is weakened by the constant exposure to elements. Even covers made with concrete can deteriorate over time. Many will remember Jessica McClure (born March 26, 1986), who became famous at the age of 18 months after falling into a well in Midland, Texas, on October 14, 1987. Between that day and October 16, rescuers worked for 58 hours to free "Baby Jessica" from the eight-inch-wide hole. The story gained worldwide attention.



Wells with openings to the surface creates a risk to people, wildlife, and livestock.

Recognize

When locating abandoned wells on your property, look for:

- * Pipe sticking up out of the ground
- * Concrete pit or vault
- * Depression or open hole
- * Plywood or metal on the ground

Report

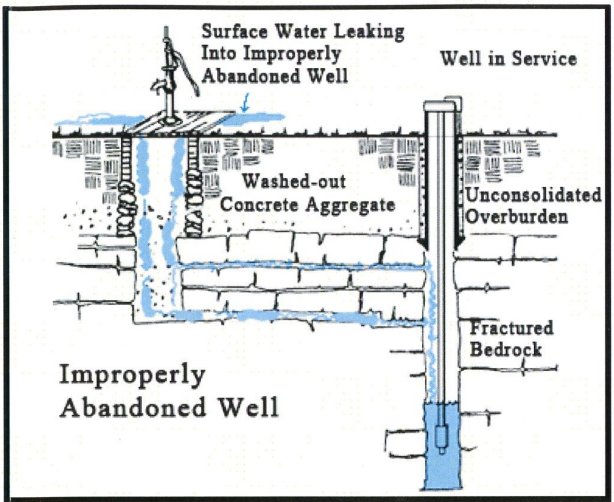
The Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Geological Survey and Resource Assessment Division requires that households previously served by a well submit a Public Water Supply Notification within 60 days of connection to a public water system. The form asks well owners to certify that: existing wells will remain in use and will be properly plugged when no longer in use, all known abandoned wells on property have been plugged, or any abandoned wells will be plugged within 90 days.

Decommission and Register

Missouri requires the plugging of abandoned wells to be registered. This is accomplished by plugging the wells according to the rules, filling out a registration record, and submitting it to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Geological Survey and Resource Assessment Division with the proper fee. Currently the fee has been eliminated to encourage the proper plugging of wells. The well registration form can be found at www.dnr.mo.gov/forms/index/html#wellheadprotection.

An abandoned well cover can deteriorate over time. Unlike modern wells, they did not contain casing.





Unplugged abandoned wells can be a conduit for contaminants such as pesticides, petroleum products, and human or animal waste entering groundwater supplies. Contaminated surface water can enter if the casing pipe does not extend high enough above the ground and/or the well cap has been broken or removed. Bacteria and nutrients entering abandoned wells may also contaminate water in nearby newer wells. Open wells offer tempting disposal receptacles for liquid and solid wastes. The disposal of any pollutant or wastewater in a well is prohibited by State codes.

Dumping in abandoned wells will contaminate the water table.





Abandoned wells not properly sealed will allow contamination from the surface to penetrate the water table.

When is a Well Considered Abandoned?

According to State law, a well is considered abandoned if use has been permanently discontinued. Also any well shall be deemed abandoned when it is in a state of disrepair that continued use for the purpose of obtaining water is impracticable and it has not been in use for a period of two years or more.

This shall include test holes that have been converted for water-supply purposes and then abandoned or not used for these purposes.



An abandoned well being properly sealed.

You can help protect your water supply by participating in the groundwater resource wellhead protection 6-step program.

The six steps are:

- (1) Create a Source Water Protection Committee.**
- (2) Delineate a Source Water Protection Area.**
- (3) Inventory known and potential sources of contamination within these areas.**
- (4) Determine the susceptibility of the water source to these contaminants.**
- (5) Implement management strategies to prevent, reduce/eliminate threats/risks of these contaminants to the water source.**
- (6) Develop contingency planning strategies to deal with water source contamination or service interruption emergencies.**

For More Information

Please contact:

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

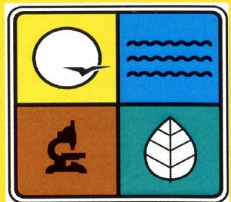
Wellhead Protection Section

P.O. Box 250

Rolla, MO 65402

www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/wellhd/

(573) 368-2165



Department of Natural Resource's Water Protection Program

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176

(800) 361-4827