Your Yard

Planning Your Water Well

(NAPS)—To be sure you can always enjoy an adequate supply of good-quality water, it's important to plan your water well if you're not part of a municipal water system.

New Homes

This, true whether you're digging a new well or replacing an old one. For example, when building a new house, it's advisable to plan the water supply before starting construction, if possible. Some owners of newly built houses have sadly discovered that the only property left on which to drill a well resulted in poorly producing wells.

Older Homes

For the person seeking a replacement well, the challenge is similar—finding a place on the property where an adequate water supply can be accessed.

In both cases, the location of the well can be critical to water quality. Your drilling contractor will likely have enough experience with the area to know about any naturally occurring or man-made contamination in the groundwater. Also, the county health department should be able to tell you about any health risks related to the groundwater.

The actual location of your well will often be determined by factors other than geology. Land surface features such as steep slopes and poorly drained areas are also considerations. Whenever possible, wells should be at higher elevations than the surrounding areas to decrease the potential for contamination via water pooling around the wellhead.

Also, the well should be located so that it is accessible for cleaning, treatment, repair, testing, inspection and other activities that may be necessary over time.

Location, Location, Location

Because of the dangers resulting from proximity of the well to sources of surface contamination, many governments have established minimum distances between the wellhead and potential contamination threats. In general, these are:

- Cesspool (receiving raw sewage), 200 ft.
- Pit, privy, filter bed, 50 ft.

Proper planning is important for your dream home—especially if you wish it to include a well.

- Septic tank, tile sewer, foundation drain, 50 ft.
- Iron sewer with approved mechanical joints, 10 ft.
- Pump house floor drain, 2 ft.
- Property boundary, 5 ft.
- Outer boundary of any road, 20 ft.
- Landfill, garbage dump, 200 ft.

Here, from the experts at the National Ground Water Association (NGWA), are additional guidelines:

- The immediate area surrounding the well should be free of debris, dirt, chemicals, fuels or any other potential contamination source.
- Surface water should in no way interact with the well area.
- The well should be a safe distance from the natural flow of groundwater from under animal pens, pastures and feeding areas.
- Any growth of weeds, trees, shrubs or grasses with root systems within 10 feet of the well should be removed.
- Ensure the wellhead is not in a roadway or driveway; if it is within 24 inches of the roadway or driveway, it should be properly marked to avoid being hit by vehicles.
- The wellhead should be at an elevation above any surrounding contamination sources.
- The topography directly surrounding the wellhead should slope away from the casing to facilitate surface runoff away from the well.

Learn More

For further information about well systems, water quality, and groundwater protection, visit www.WellOwner.org.