

Understanding Your Well



As a private well owner, you are responsible for the condition of your well, so take the time to understand how it works . Your well taps directly into our shared groundwater source, so contamination from one well or septic system can put other people at risk.

Here are some easy to use resources to get you started.

- Our OLA Shoreline Handbook has sections on Water Sources and Septic Systems. It is a comprehensive overview and easy to understand. You should have a white binder containing a printed version, or use the link on the sidebar of our website's Environment page.
- Well Aware Guide, Green Communities Canada (GCC), a 30 page booklet. Some printed booklets are often available at our AGM or through the Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL) in Smiths Falls, or read it online. See the "Be Well Aware" page on www.wellaware.ca.
- FOCA's A Shoreline Owner's Guide to Healthy Waterfronts, available online See page 18 "Protecting and Testing Drinking Water Sources" and page 19 "Be Smart About Septic Systems. "
- CMHC About your House Series, "Your Septic System." 10 pages. Dated but still very useful. Simplest to just google it.
- The Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has a wealth of information on its website under the headings "Drinking Water" and "Sewage – Land Control". Some printed information is available in the Smiths Falls office, 25 Johnston St. (near the hospital). They also have lists of qualified well drillers and septic installers in the region.

A Reminder About Well Water Testing

Frequency. It is recommended that you have your well water tested three times per year. You should also test after any major plumbing repairs, after flooding , if you detect changes in quality, or if users experience unexplained health problems that may be water related. In many cases your water may taste, smell and 'look' just fine, but there is the potential for microorganisms to be present.

Health Unit Testing. You have access to free water testing through the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. This testing only measures the total coliform and E.coli in your water sample. There are several sites in the tri counties including the health unit office in Smiths Falls, The Office in Perth and Country Roads Medical Centre in Portland where you can pick up and drop off sample bottles. (You may also pick up sample bottles, but not drop them off, at the Tay and DNE municipal offices.) Samples are couriered to a lab in Ottawa or Kingston for testing. The results are ready in 4-5 days by phone. Do not drop samples off on Fridays, and be sure to consult the health unit for possible deadline changes around holiday weekends.

Additional Testing. Do not rely on the results from a single sample. A series of three samples taken one to two weeks apart will help determine your water quality and stability of your water supply. If you wish to have your water tested for other substances, you will need to pay to have that done through a private lab. A list is on the health unit website. Caducean Environmental Laboratories was the lab used during the 2014 OLA groundwater sampling program.