



## PROTECTING CLEAN WATER TOGETHER

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

### Where Does Your Water Come From?

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If you said “from my well,” you’re half right.

Private wells don’t tap into an underground river or rock-lined reservoir that is yours and yours alone. Most wells in the Brodhead watershed are drilled down to below the water table, where layers of rock, soil, sand, and sediments are saturated with water. This porous, watery, underground rock is what people mean by “the aquifer” — shared by hundreds or thousands of people.

A pump draws water from this shared aquifer into your home’s pipes for drinking, bathing, flushing, and all your domestic water. Water you take out is refilled — or “recharged” — by rainwater and snowmelt.

And that’s where things can get dicey.

Anything that goes onto the ground can go into the ground — and eventually make its way to the aquifer that you and your family depend on. When the road crew spreads salt during a winter storm, or a neighbor dumps used motor oil out behind the garage, and even when you spread pesticides or fertilizers in the garden, those chemicals can find their way to your drinking water.

Salt is particularly risky. That’s because the soil does a good job of purifying many contaminants — but it can’t cleanse itself of salt. Something as simple as cutting back on road salt can help keep your drinking water safe.

Your municipal government plays an important role in the water you drink. Towns must balance environmental concerns with road safety, but they also determine how an area is zoned. Aquifers don’t respect property lines — so zoning decisions your elected officials make about how much land can be covered with roofs and asphalt, what kinds of building, businesses, and activities are allowed — and where — all affect your well and your water. Once the trees are bulldozed and the warehouses are going up, it’s too late.

#### Did You Know...?

- During long stretches of sub-freezing weather, standing water may freeze, but creeks don’t and neither do wells. Both creeks and wells get their base flow of water from ground water — and whether it’s 100 degrees or minus 20 on the surface, ground water stays a close-to-constant 55 degrees; well above freezing.
- If you have “town water,” whether from a private community system or a public utility, that water comes from a combination of wells and surface water like the Brodhead Creek.



*For humans, fish, and every living thing, Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member today. <https://www.brodheadwatershed.org>.*