

City of Saskatoon: Options for Groundwater Protection: Commenting on Your Feedback

Introduction

The following is a list of topics we heard from the stakeholders who provided feedback on the City of Saskatoon's Options for Groundwater Protection project. For each topic we provided a summary of what we heard and how we plan to address the topic below.

Common Topics

The following is a list of common topics from previous engagement activities:

Aquifer protection:

- 1) ***What we heard:*** There is little information on the viability of groundwater resources, as well as groundwater quality and quantity in Saskatoon. Contamination of groundwater was a major concern for survey participants.

What we are exploring: We acknowledge more detailed mapping of aquifers within Saskatoon city limits may be required to fully understand their viability and vulnerability at a local scale and to inform further groundwater protection measures, such as aquifer protection zoning.

- 2) ***What we heard:*** The City could consider creating bylaws to limit development in areas of high aquifer vulnerability.

Our response: The long-range planning process is being evaluated to consider how to best incorporate valuable natural assets such as wetlands, which can be focal points for aquifer recharge. A more detailed understanding of groundwater resources in and around Saskatoon is needed before zoning restrictions could be considered. These measures will be explored in the future but are not being proposed by City Administration at this time.

Awareness and education:

What we heard: Educational programs and effective communication is important to grow the community's understanding of groundwater and its protection.

What we are exploring: The development and use of educational material will be explored during the implementation stage following a decision by City Council.

Contaminated sites:

What we heard: The City could identify and manage sites that are known to be contaminated or pose a risk to groundwater.

Our response: The City maintains an internal database of impacted sites on City properties and manages them in accordance with [The Environmental Management and Protection Act](#). The City is also developing a [Brownfield Renewal Strategy](#) in

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collaboration with the [Vacant Lot and Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program](#) and [Plan for Growth](#) to encourage the redevelopment of properties in Saskatoon. Management of impacted sites by private responsible parties falls under the jurisdiction of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment.

It is the City's understanding that a publicly accessible registry of impacted sites throughout the province is under development by the Ministry of Environment. City Administration could utilize such a registry, if and when it becomes available, to inform future policy.

Decommissioning:

What we heard: Proper standards and methods are important for decommissioning pumping and monitoring wells. Many respondents suggested strengthening requirements for decommissioning.

What we are exploring: City Administration intends to create an administrative policy for monitoring wells on City land that includes decommissioning guidelines. We are considering options to expand these guidelines to large scale developments, city-wide, or implementing standards.

Demand for domestic wells:

What we heard: Public interest in accessing groundwater for private use is likely to vary based on future wet and dry cycles, the cost of City water, and the economy.

Our response: The options presented to Council are focused on improving groundwater protection in Saskatoon and managing the associated risks both to residents and the City.

Jurisdiction:

What we heard: Regulating/protecting groundwater is the responsibility of the Water Security Agency and the City should not be involved.

Many respondents identified the need to update provincial groundwater legislation in Saskatchewan. [The Groundwater Regulations](#) were released in 1966 and last amended in 2006.

Our response: While the City acknowledges the jurisdiction of the Water Security Agency, as a municipal government the City has the jurisdiction to create bylaws or policy to complement or strengthen provincial legislation when needed. Neither [The Groundwater Regulations](#) nor City of Saskatoon's current bylaws address the licensing of domestic-purpose groundwater wells, unsafe consumption of groundwater, nor the decommissioning of monitoring wells and abandoned pumping wells in Saskatoon.



It is not within the City's jurisdiction to reform provincial legislation. However, we plan to share the feedback we received with the Water Security Agency and have included them throughout our engagement.

Record keeping:

What we heard: The City could create a database for all existing groundwater wells within Saskatoon.

Our response: An internal database of monitoring wells has been created from City records. It includes wells owned by the City and private wells on City land, but does not include wells on private land. To create and maintain a database of all groundwater wells would require substantial effort and bylaw changes.

The regulatory option we are proposing for domestic purpose wells would allow the City to obtain records of new domestic pumping wells after a bylaw is implemented. However, records of existing pumping wells and non-City monitoring wells would require further measures to obtain that we are not proposing at this time.

Water use and conservation:

- 1) **What we heard:** Opportunities to use groundwater to irrigate parks or as a backup water supply to the City's river source could be assessed.

Our response: The City is developing a long-term [Water Conservation Strategy](#) under a separate initiative that aims to provide an action plan for water reduction in all sectors, including residential, industrial, commercial, institutional sectors, and municipal.

- 2) **What we heard:** The City could explore updating building guidelines to encourage roof-top rainwater collection from homes.

Our response: The City has a [Storm Water Management Credit Program](#) to encourage multi-residential and non-residential properties to collect and use rainwater, which reduces discharge to the storm system and conserves potable water. The City also has a [Healthy Yards](#) program that provides education on rain barrels, low-water gardening and rain gardens encourage the use of rainwater as an alternative to tap water.

