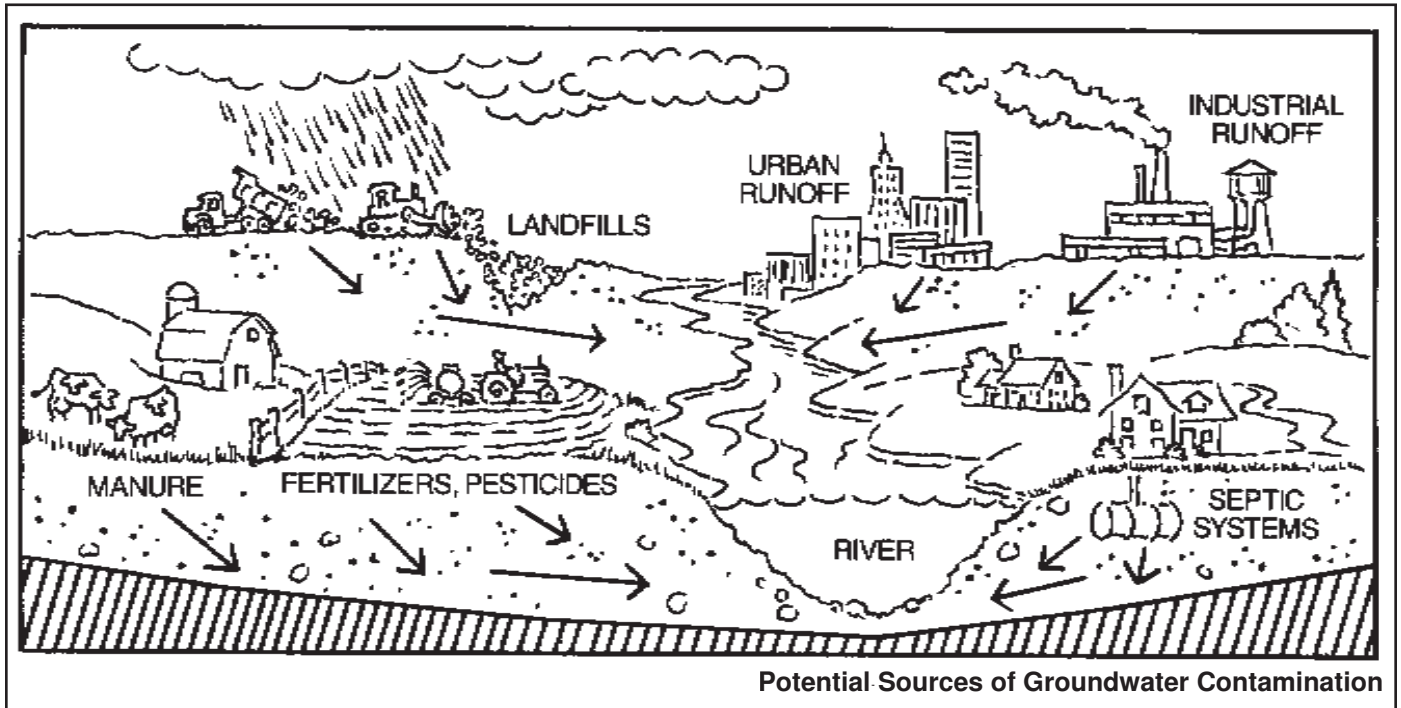


Protecting Groundwater Is Everyone's Business

We All Live Downstream



Potential Sources of Groundwater Contamination

What is Groundwater?

Groundwater is water found below the earth's surface. It is stored or transmitted through pores and channels in the soil and underlying bedrock. Groundwater is mainly supplied by precipitation that has infiltrated the soil and bedrock. Wells are drilled into groundwater and springs are fed by groundwater.

Surface water, such as streams, lakes, and oceans feed into or draw on groundwater. Most groundwater eventually re-emerges as surface water.

Groundwater pollution is caused by many sources including:

- Improper use and over-application of herbicides and pesticides;
- Malfunctioning septic tanks;
- Improper disposal of household wastes such as old paint, cleaners, insect and weed controls, hobby chemicals, used motor oil, and automobile antifreeze.

Why is Groundwater Important?

Groundwater is an important water source in many regions including urban and rural areas. Groundwater supplies nearly half of all households and is the primary source of water used for agricultural irrigation in the United States.

Groundwater Contamination

Traditionally, well and spring waters have had the images of being exceptionally pure, filtered by the soil, and unaffected by contamination. We have learned through painful experience these beliefs can be inaccurate because soil cannot adequately filter many contaminants.

Many land surface activities, such as illegal industrial waste disposal, improper application of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers, inadequate urban stormwater management practices, and accidental spills can leak substances into the ground. Once in the ground, the substances move downward towards the groundwater.

Some nutrients in water, such as phosphorus, are filtered and absorbed by soil before reaching the groundwater. Other nutrients, such as nitrogen, are soluble and cannot be absorbed by soil particles. Soluble nutrients are

