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What is the Penn State Master Well Owner Network?

The Penn State Master Well Owner Network (MWON) is a program dedicated to educating PA residents about the proper construction and management of private water systems.

The goal of this program is to educate private water system owners and promote better management of private wells, springs, and cisterns throughout the state.

MWON Sponsors

This project is made possible in part by the Penn State Cooperative Extension, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Ground Water Association.

Water Supply Education Continues at Ag Progress Days

MWON again provided an educational display at Penn State's Ag Progress Days in Rock Springs, PA on August 14-16, 2012. Ten MWON volunteers from across Pennsylvania volunteered for four hour shifts including Lee Murphy, Peter Wulfhorst, Brad Hengst, Mike Vahey, Carl Rohr, Herb Bomberger, Julie Brooks, Thomas Zordan and Doc & Ruthann Schooley.

Individual consultation was provided to 277 private water supply owners over the three days. Forty water test kits were also distributed from the Penn State Agricultural Analytical Laboratory and several hundred folks entered the contest for a free sanitary well cap. Thanks again to all of the volunteers that helped to staff our exhibit at Ag Progress Days!



MWON volunteers Julie Brooks and Tom Zordan educate a private water supply owner at Ag Progress Days on August 16, 2012.

Opportunities for New Volunteer Training

The Penn State Master Well Owner Network (MWON) has released its schedule of training opportunities for new MWON volunteers for the next year. New volunteers can choose from any one of the following full-day, Saturday workshops or seven week online training modules:

- September 24-November 5, 2012 - Online training module
- February 11-March 25, 2013 – Online training module
- Saturday, March 16, 2013 – York, PA - 9 AM to 3 PM – lunch provided
- Saturday, June 8, 2013 – Forest County - 9 AM to 3 PM – lunch provided

Those interested in becoming a MWON volunteer should complete the online application form available at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/mwon_application or call Bryan Swistock at 814-863-0194. All newly trained volunteers receive an 80-page Guide to Private Water Systems handbook, discounted water testing through the Penn State testing laboratory, and access to a variety of experts and educational resources available through Penn State Extension. Trained volunteers are asked to pass along their knowledge about private water systems to family, friends, co-workers and neighbors.

Managing Private Water Wells During Drought

Droughts can be a stressful time for rural homeowners and farmers who rely on groundwater wells for a water supply. The availability of water underground is often invisible to the homeowner creating nervousness about whether the water supply will continue to meet the water needs of the home or farm. While the historic drought of 2012 has not impacted Pennsylvania as severely as the Midwest, increased climatic variability over the past decades has raised the likelihood of future severe droughts in Pennsylvania. Below are some general tips and links to additional information about managing private water supplies during droughts.

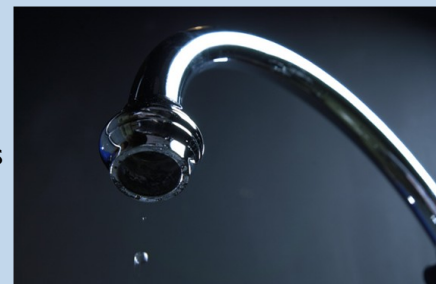
Monitoring water levels – water level meters can be used to measure the level of groundwater in a well in comparison to the pump intake but these meters are costly and best left to use by water resources experts. Instead, water well owners can access and monitor groundwater levels in nearby monitoring wells operated by state and federal agencies. The USGS, Pennsylvania Water Science Center provides graphs of groundwater levels in comparison to historic norms for each county of Pennsylvania at: http://pa.water.usgs.gov/infodata/well_duration.php.

Similar maps for rainfall departures from normal at a variety of time scales (one month to one year) are available from the National Water Service, Mid Atlantic River Forecasting Center at: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/marfc/Precipitation/Departures/>

Conserving water – water conservation is especially important during droughts and is even mandated during declared drought emergencies. Penn State Extension has numerous publications on water conservation ranging from emergency steps to immediately reduce water use to longer term strategies for permanent water savings all linked at: <http://extension.psu.edu/water/conservation>

What if the Well Runs Dry? – Keep in mind that there are a number of reasons that a well may fail to produce water during a drought ranging from simple problems with a submersible pump to more significant issues caused by a lowering of the groundwater level in the well. Consult with a qualified water well contractor to determine the cause and potential solutions to the loss of water from a well. To find a local water well contractor, consult your yellow pages or a searchable database of members of the National Ground Water Association at <http://wellowner.org/finding-a-contractor/contractor-lookup/>

For more details and links on coping with water supplies during droughts, consult the Penn State Extension drought website at: <http://extension.psu.edu/water/drought>

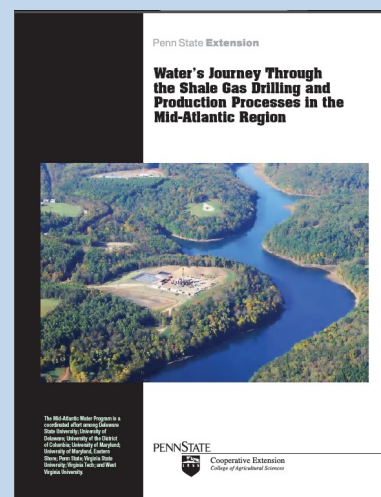


Updated Marcellus/Water Fact Sheets Available

Penn State Extension has created or updated several fact sheets on water issues related to natural gas drilling activity including:

- *Water's Journey Through the Shale Gas Drilling and Production Processes in the Mid-Atlantic Region*—A 12 page color publication detailing water acquisition, water use, wastewater treatment, discharge and return
- *Testing Drinking Water Supplies Near Gas Drilling Activity*—A six page fact sheet updated in June 2012 detailing testing strategies for private water supplies.
- *Gas Well Drilling and Your Private Water Supply*—A six page fact sheet on regulations and management strategies for private water supplies near gas drilling sites.

To download these and other publications, visit <http://extension.psu.edu/water/marcellus-shale>



It's Time for Volunteer Reporting!

Each year in September we compile a report of accomplishments from Penn State Master Well Owner volunteers. This report is vital to ensure the continued funding of the MWON network in Pennsylvania. Last year, reports submitted by Master Well Owner volunteers showed that they had dedicated 1,000 hours to educate nearly 20,000 Pennsylvania private water system owners through the state!

If you are a MWON volunteer, you will receive an email with a link to the annual accomplishment report or a paper evaluation in the mail (if you did not provide an email during your training). Please take just a minute or two to complete the accomplishment report and summarize any education you have conducted over the past year related to the Master Well Owner Network. The reporting time period is September 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012. You can also use the URL below to access the annual accomplishment report:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/mwon>. Please complete the annual report by September 17, 2012.

Thank you for your help and for your support of the MWON program!

Next DEP@Home Webinar to Focus on Water Wellness

Join experts from the Department of Environmental Protection and Penn State Extension's Master Well Owner Network on Wednesday, Sept. 19 for an informative webinar about keeping your on-lot septic and private water systems problem-free. Learn how to avoid malfunction, prevent contamination, conserve water and reduce waste flow. The webinar will take place from 7 to 8 p.m. Attendees can participate from the convenience of their home computers. Featured speakers include Bryan Swistock of the Pennsylvania Master Well Owners Network and John Diehl of DEP's Bureau of Point and Non-Point Source Management. This webinar is the second in a series of webinars produced by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. They are aimed at educating families about improving their home environment and safeguarding their health. Future topics will focus on energy conservation and radon testing and mitigation. This webinar is free and open to any and all interested residents. To register for the webinar, visit: <https://copa.webex.com/copa/onstage/g.php?d=649028166&t=a>

Upcoming Private Water Supply Workshops

Penn State Extension and the Master Well Owner Network will be offering a variety of workshops related to management of private water supplies over the next several months including:

- How to Interpret a Water Test Report— These two hour workshops are typically targeted at counties where natural gas drilling is resulting in extensive testing of private water supplies. Participants can bring water test reports to the meeting to receive expert interpretation and suggestions on solving existing water quality issues.
- Safe Drinking Water Clinics—these two hour workshops provide free, basic water testing and interpretation of results for a limited number of participants. Over the next several months, clinics will be offered in Erie, Armstrong, Berks, Huntingdon, Lancaster and Jefferson Counties. Additional clinics may be added in 2013.
- Testing Drinking Water Supplies for Dairy Farms—a limited number of free water tests will be available for dairy farmers this fall with follow-up workshops to help farmers determine if water quality may be impacting animal health and/or milk production.

As workshops are scheduled, they will be advertised at: <http://extension.psu.edu/water/events>

extension.psu.edu/water/mwon:
Master Well Owner Network.

extension.psu.edu/water:
Penn State Cooperative Extension
Water Resource Information.

Important Web Links

<http://www.pgwa.org>:
PA Ground Water Association

<http://www.wellowner.org>:
National Ground Water Association's
website for consumer information

Groundwater Symposium

The Penn State Master Well Owner Network, in conjunction with the PA Department of Environmental Protection and other sponsors will host a Pennsylvania Ground Water Symposium at Penn State University in May 2013. In addition to several keynote speakers, the symposium will also include concurrent sessions on emerging groundwater issues in the state. More details on the symposium including a call for papers will be released in September and will be available on the Penn State Water Resources website at <http://extension.psu.edu/water>.

Upcoming Water Webinars

Beginning on October 31, 2012, The Penn State Water Resources Extension team will offer monthly webinars on timely water topics. Webinar topics will include Marcellus water issues, youth education, West Nile Virus, septic system management and lake algae control. If you are interested in viewing past webinars or learning about upcoming webinars, visit our website at: <http://extension.psu.edu/water/webinar-series>

A Sampling of Upcoming Events

- September 24, 2012 — Beginning of fall online training for new MWON volunteers
- October 4, 2012 — Safe Drinking Water Clinic—Erie, PA
- October 11, 2012 — Safe Drinking Water Clinic—Ford City, PA
- October 24, 2012 — Water Test Interpretation Workshop—Brownsville, PA
- November 7, 2012 — Safe Drinking Water Clinic—Berks County
- November 13, 2012 — Water Test Interpretation Workshop—Dushore, PA
- December 12, 2012 — Water Test Interpretation Workshop—Bradford County
- January 22 and 29, 2013 — Statewide webinars on Drinking Water for Dairy Herds
- February 11, 2013 — Beginning of winter online training for new MWON volunteers

Visit the water extension events page for more details (<http://extension.psu.edu/water/events>)