

Aquifer Basics + Contamination Disposal

By Julia McHugh, SAJB

The Spokane Aquifer Joint Board (SAJB) is made up of twenty-two water purveyors throughout the Spokane Area (including the City of Spokane, Town of Millwood, Liberty Lake and Spokane Valley) dedicated to providing clean, safe drinking water to your homes, offices and industries, every day. Collectively, approximately 122 wells supply water to more than 300,000 customers. This water comes from the Rathdrum Prairie – Spokane Aquifer.

Beneath our feet is our **sole source of drinking water**, the Aquifer, which lies between 20 to 600 feet below the earth's surface. There is no protective layer between surface activities and the gravelly 'sponge' through which the water passes. This means that our water supply is particularly vulnerable to contamination from the improper disposal and handling of hazardous materials that we may use at home, in our schools, at businesses and manufacturing facilities.

The SAJB is pursuing the following four areas of emphasis to increase citizen awareness and cooperation in protecting this irreplaceable resource. However, individual efforts are key to maintaining our high quality drinking water.

EDUCATION and AWARENESS – This subcommittee is tasked with developing and implementing a long-term awareness campaign targeted at citizens living and working over our drinking water supply, the Rathdrum Prairie – Spokane Aquifer.

HOUSEHOLD CONTAMINANT DISPOSAL – provides assistance to residents with pickup and disposal of contaminants by augmenting the current collection efforts of the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System. Dispose of ALL household hazardous materials properly and at NO CHARGE by using one of the three Waste Transfer Stations that accepts them. Call the Recycling Hotline for more information at 747-0242.

In North Idaho, for the Ramsey Road Transfer Station, call: Kootenai Co. Solid Waste Department 208/769-4402.

PRO-ACTIVE BUSINESS ASSISTANCE – provides assistance and information (not enforcement) to small businesses for contaminant disposal methods and procedures. If your business generates less than 200 pounds of dangerous waste or 2.2 pounds of acute

hazardous waste per month, call: Spokane Solid Waste Management @ 625-7898.

If your business generates more than 200 pounds of dangerous waste or more than 2.2 pounds of acute hazardous waste per month, call: the Washington State Dept. of Ecology @ 456-2926.

POTENTIAL CONTAMINANT SOURCE INVENTORY – development & maintenance of a regional potential contaminant source inventory database.

Under current Washington State regulations for wellhead protection, every two years water purveyors are required to notify potential contaminant sources (businesses) that are located within defined wellhead protection areas. This is a reminder of the business location over the Aquifer, and the need to protect it.