

## What is a Watershed?

A watershed is all the land that drains to the same river or lake. Water travels from the highest points at the watershed edge to the lowest point at the bottom of the watershed. Wherever you are, you are in a watershed!

When it rains, some water travels over the land surface to the nearest stream or creek. This water is called surface runoff or stormwater. As the stormwater flows, it picks up any contaminants lying on the surface – pesticides and fertilizer from lawns, manure from farms, sediment from construction sites, and oil and gas from roads. Small streams join to form larger and larger rivers, until the water – and any contaminants it is carrying – reaches the water sources.

Some precipitation, instead of traveling over the land, will percolate into the soil and reach the groundwater. Similarly, the groundwater may pick up nitrates from failing septic systems, gasoline from leaky storage tanks, and industrial chemicals from improper dumping. The groundwater may supply your drinking water wells, and ultimately flows into one of the rivers or lakes in the watershed.



## Other Ways to Protect Your Drinking Water

### What can you do?

- Dispose of used motor oil at a garage that will recycle it. Never pour oil on the ground or in a storm drain on the street.
- Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides on your lawn and garden. Use biodegradable products when available.
- Do not pour unwanted pharmaceuticals or unused chemicals or paints down the drain or flush in the toilet. Take your pharmaceuticals to a collection area to avoid use by others.
- Participate in community cleanup events or planting projects.
- Contact your county solid waste department for Household Hazardous Waste collection events in your area.
- Clean up after your pet. Pet waste contains bacteria and other pathogens that can make its way into waterways through rain or snow melt.
- If you have an on-lot septic system, inspect it and arrange for pump-out every three years, or according to local ordinances.
- Remember: anything you throw or store on the ground can find its way into the groundwater. Store and handle chemicals properly.

### For more information on recycling programs:

Check your County Solid Waste Authority website for programs available.

## HOMEOWNER GUIDE

### Tips for Residential Heating Oil Tank Owners



### Brookville Municipal Authority Source Water Protection Program

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## The Costs of Cleanup

When heating oil or other materials makes its way into the environment, plants, animals, and humans can all be affected. Leaking tanks can potentially contaminate public water supplies, private wells, contaminate soil, and cause fire or explosion hazards.

Cleanups to tank owners can also be very expensive. Owners of leaking underground storage tanks are required to clean up affected contaminated soil as well as polluted groundwater or surface water like creeks and streams.

If you notice a leak, it is in your best interest to clean it up promptly and properly to reduce expense, liability, and the potential for contamination. Your best bet is to prevent contamination by monitoring and maintaining your tank.

Access these informative factsheets at [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us) KEYWORD Tank Cleanup:

- *Home Heating Oil Releases*
- *Leaking Underground Storage Tanks: Controlling Cleanup Costs*
- *Prevention Tips (KEYWORD: Tank Tips)*

## How can releases from residential tanks be prevented?

- ✓ Routinely inspect the exterior of an aboveground tank and all attached equipment.
- ✓ Install spill and overfill prevention devices.
- ✓ Ensure that the tank address is clear and the fill line is marked, to help avoid accidental deliveries.
- ✓ Consider a secondary containment structure to prevent spills or leaks from entering the environment.
- ✓ Be sure to take out the fill pipe if removing a tank from inside your home.
- ✓ If you notice drips or leaks, or you are using more oil than normal, call a professional for a detailed inspection of your tank.



### How does drinking water sometimes become polluted?

Your drinking water may become polluted when substances that are harmful to human health enter the groundwater or surface source, like a lake or reservoir. Common pollutants include gasoline or oil from leaking tanks, homeowner lawn and garden activities, salt from winter road maintenance, and other chemicals from stormwater runoff. Once water is contaminated, it must be treated or abandoned as a drinking water source. The expense of treating polluted water or finding a new source of drinking water can be avoided through source water protection.

