

Federal Laws

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has most of the responsibility for federal activities relating to the quality of drinking water. Other agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Energy and the Army Corps of Engineers also have some jurisdiction over activities affecting groundwater.

The Safe Drinking Water Act -- authorizes EPA to set standards for maximum levels of contaminants in drinking water, to regulate underground injection wells, to designate areas that rely on a single aquifer for their water supply, and to establish a nationwide program that encourages states to develop programs to protect public water supply wells.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act — regulates the storage, transportation, treatment, and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes to prevent contaminants from leaching into groundwater from municipal landfills, underground storage tanks, surface impoundments, and hazardous waste disposal facilities.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) -- authorizes EPA to clean up contamination caused by chemical spills or hazardous waste sites that could or do pose threats to the environment. Amendments in 1986 authorize citizens to sue violators and establish “community right-to-know” programs.

The Clean Water Act -- regulates pollutant discharges from point sources, requires development of surface water quality criteria, provides funding for construction of sewage treatment plants, authorizes states to develop controls for non-point source pollution and groundwater protection strategies.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act -- authorizes EPA to control the use of pesticides that have the ability to leach into groundwater.

The Toxic Substances Control Act — authorizes EPA to control the manufacture, use, storage, distribution, or disposal of toxic chemicals.

Excerpted from: *Groundwater: A Primer for Pennsylvanians*. The PDF version is available on the WREN Website at <http://pa.lwv.org/wren/pubs/primer.html>. To obtain a print copy of the *Primer* or to learn about other resource materials available from WREN, call the WREN Resource Center at 1-800-692-7281. Or visit the WREN website at: <http://pa.lwv.org/wren/>

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