

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**WATER WELL
(No.)
CODE 642**

DEFINITION

A hole drilled, dug, driven, bored, jetted or otherwise constructed to an aquifer for water supply.

PURPOSE

- Provide water for livestock, wildlife, irrigation, and other agricultural uses
- Facilitate proper use of vegetation, such as keeping animals on rangeland and pastures and away from streams, and providing water for wildlife.

CONDITION WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land uses where the underground supply of water is sufficient in quantity and quality for the intended purpose.

This practice applies only to production wells, and does include repairs to existing water wells. Specifically excluded are any types of wells installed solely for monitoring or observation purposes; injection wells and piezometers. The standard does not apply to pumps installed in wells, remedial wells, above ground installations such as pumping plants, pipelines and tanks, temporary test wells and decommissioning of wells (refer to Conservation Practice Standard, Water Well Decommissioning (351)).

CRITERIA

Laws and Regulations. The investigation, design, or installation of water wells according to this standard shall adhere to all applicable local, state, tribal, and federal laws and regulations.

All wells that involve NRCS assistance or funding shall be constructed in accordance with criteria found in Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.

Wells may only be installed by a licensed well driller. Individuals, as allowed in Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725, may install drive point wells. On tribal lands, well driller qualifications may be subject to tribal approval. A well construction record that meets MDH requirements shall be submitted to document the completed practice.

Suitability of Site. The availability of groundwater for its intended use at the site shall be determined by using reliable local experience and reviewing all available

relevant geologic maps and reports, well records maintained by state and federal agencies, and design, construction, and maintenance records of nearby wells. One common source of well data in Minnesota is the County Well Index (CWI) developed by the Minnesota Geological Survey and the Minnesota Department of Health. An appropriate level of investigation, including test well drilling, is conducted on-site, as needed, prior to well construction to determine site-specific hydrogeologic conditions.

The site shall be suitable for safe operation of the drilling equipment.

Well Head Protection. Wells shall be located at safe distances from potential sources of pollution, including unsealed abandoned wells. The allowable distance shall be based on consideration of site-specific hydrogeologic factors and shall comply with requirements of all applicable local, state, tribal, or federal regulations or construction codes.

Surface runoff and drainage that might reach the wellhead from potential areas of contamination, such as those used by livestock, shall be diverted.

Wells shall be located a safe distance from both overhead and underground utility lines and other safety hazards.

Casing Diameter. Casing diameter shall be sized to permit satisfactory installation and efficient operation of the pump, and large enough to assure that uphole velocity is 5 feet per second or less for the designed discharge to protect against excessive head loss.

Materials. To prevent galvanic corrosion, dissimilar metals shall not be joined in direct contact.

Casing Strength. Well casing wall thickness shall be sufficient to withstand all anticipated static and dynamic pressures imposed on the casing during installation, well development and use. Required casing strength shall be determined as shown in NEH Part 631, Chapter 32, Well Design and Spring Development.

Joint Strength. Joints for well casings shall have adequate strength to carry the load due to the casing length and still be watertight, or shall be mechanically supported during installation to maintain joint integrity. Such mechanically supported casings shall terminate on

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firm material that can adequately support the casing weight.

Screen. Well screens shall be installed in any aquifer material likely to produce silt or sand. Well screens may be constructed of commercially manufactured screen sections, well points, or field-perforated sections.

The screen shall be constructed with the slot width determined from aquifer samples. Perforation by any method is allowable provided proper slot size and entrance velocity limits can be met. Screen open areas can range from 1 percent for field-perforated screens to 25 percent or more for continuous wire-wrapped screens. To assure good well efficiency, open areas should be designed to approximate aquifer porosity. High percentages of open area also make well development more effective.

The length and open area of the screen shall be sized to limit entrance velocity of water into the well in order to maximize water yield, while simultaneously preventing sand from being pumped into the well and preventing screen corrosion and encrustation.

A conservative water well design will have a well screen entrance velocity of about 0.1 foot per second, which has been the common industry standard for many years. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) Standard A-100-06; however, no longer stipulates a maximum screen entrance velocity and cites recent research and testing that indicate that allowable well screen velocities are a function of the aquifer characteristics, the overall well design and intended performance, and the quality of the groundwater being pumped. For the purposes of this standard, the maximum recommended entrance velocity shall be less than or equal to 0.7 foot per second.

Depth of the aquifer below ground surface and the thickness of aquifer to be penetrated by the well shall govern the position of the screen in the well.

Maximum drawdown shall not be permitted below the top of the highest screen or pump intake.

Seals (Packers). Telescoped screen assemblies shall be provided with one or more sand-tight seals between the top of the telescoped screen assembly and casing.

Filter Pack. Installation of a filter pack around the well screen shall be considered under the following conditions: presence of a poorly graded, fine sand aquifer; presence of a highly variable aquifer, such as alternating sand and clay layers; presence of a poorly cemented sandstone or similar aquifer; a requirement for maximum yield from a low-yielding aquifer; and holes drilled by reverse circulation.

Pre-packed Well Screens. For heaving or caving sands, silty or fine-grained aquifers, and for horizontal or angled wells, a commercial pre-packed well screen may be substituted for a conventionally installed (by tremie) filter pack.

Installation. Installation must comply with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.

If a zone is penetrated that is determined or suspected to contain water of quality unsuitable for the intended use, the zone shall be sealed to prevent infiltration of the poor-quality water into the well and the developed portion of the aquifer.

If the well is located within the 100-year flood plain, the well casing shall be extended at least 5 feet above the 100-year flood elevation, or the well shall be made waterproof.

Well Development. Well development shall be performed to repair damage done to the formation by the drilling process, and to alter the physical characteristics of the aquifer surrounding the borehole so that water will flow more freely to the well.

The method of well development used shall be selected based on geologic character of the aquifer, type of drilling rig, and type of screen.

Aquifer Development. For massive, unfractured rock that is unresponsive to well development procedures, the use of aquifer stimulation techniques may be considered to improve well efficiency and specific capacity. Techniques may include dry ice, acidizing, explosives, or hydrofracturing, depending on the composition and structure of the formation.

Grouting and Sealing. Grouting and sealing must comply with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.

The casing shall be surrounded at the ground surface by a 4-inch thick concrete slab extending at least 2 feet in all directions from the outside of the casing to prevent contamination. The slab shall slope away from well.

A positive seal (grouted in place) or packer shall be provided between the casing and the less pervious material overlying the aquifer of artesian wells, and in all aquifers where co-mingling of waters is undesirable.

Access Port. An access port with a minimum diameter of 0.5 inch shall be installed to allow for unobstructed measurement of depth of the water surface, or for a pressure gage for measuring shut-in pressure of a flowing well. Access ports and pressure gages or other openings in the cover shall be sealed or capped to prevent entrance of surface water or foreign material

into the well. Removable caps are acceptable as access ports.

Disinfection. Wells shall be disinfected immediately following their construction or repair to neutralize any contamination from equipment, material, or surface drainage introduced during construction. The disinfection process shall comply with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.

Water Quality Testing. Sampling and testing shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local requirements. These requirements vary according to the water quality parameters associated with the intended use(s) of the water.

CONSIDERATIONS

The potential for adverse interference with existing nearby production wells should be evaluated in planning and designing the water well.

The potential for ground water overdraft and the long-term safe yield of the aquifer shall be considered in planning.

If practicable, wells shall be located in higher ground and up gradient from sources of surface contamination or flooding. In determining gradient, both pumped and unpumped conditions shall be considered.

Potential effects of installation and operation of the well on cultural, historical, archeological, or scientific resources at or near the site should be considered in planning.

Fencing of the well and associated equipment should be considered to prevent contamination and damage by wildlife, livestock, or human activity.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications shall be prepared for specific field sites in accordance with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended uses. A record of the installation of this practice shall be made and shall include the following information:

- Location of the water well by Global Positioning System, latitude/longitude, township/range, or other georeferencing convention, of such precision that it can be readily re-located
- Date of completion of the water well
- Name of landowner
- Name, title, and address of person responsible for the water well
- Total depth of the water well
- Length of casing and screening

- Inside diameter of well bore or casing
- Type of casing material or schedule (e.g., standard weight steel, or PVC sch-80)
- Static water level measured from ground surface
- Water chemistry before and after disinfection

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A plan for maintenance of a well shall be prepared. The well construction records shall be kept on file with the maintenance plan by the owner/operator. As a minimum, the plan shall include a statement of identified problems, corrective action taken, date, and specific capacity (yield per unit drawdown) of well before and after corrective action was taken.

REFERENCES

National Engineering Handbook, Part 631, Chapter 32, Well Design and Spring Development