



Deep Underground Injection Control (UIC) Wells

Deep UIC wells are stormwater control systems that penetrate a confining layer to inject stormwater into lower strata. This technique is increasingly being used throughout the state of Washington to dispose of stormwater and is considered a Low Impact Development technique by the Department of Ecology. Utilities that provide drinking water from groundwater sources have become increasingly alarmed by the use of this disposal method and its potential to contaminate current and future drinking water sources. PFAS contamination has already occurred in this state as a result of UIC wells, and it will cost millions of dollars to clean up or obtain new water rights, if they are available.

WASWD and the Department of Health conducted discussions with Ecology in 2017 to provide additional protections to groundwater sources. That effort resulted in the addition of a UIC requirements section in the Ecology Stormwater Manuals for Western and Eastern Washington. Concerns remained in Wellhead Protection Areas, however, where current Best Management Practices are insufficient to protect drinking water sources and there are no maintenance and inspection requirements. Consequently, in 2020 WASWD appealed the Stormwater Manuals, and as a settlement to that appeal WASWD and Department of Ecology have been in ongoing discussions about more appropriate actions to safeguard the state's drinking water sources. The development of the next round of NPDES Stormwater Permits and updated Stormwater Manuals for 2024 affords an opportunity to get these changes widely discussed and vetted. WASWD staff will continue to advocate for protection of drinking water sources through that process.