



Data Elements Definitions Glossary

Contamination - The presence or addition of any substance to water which is or may become injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public or private individuals, and which is or may become injurious to domestic, commercial, industrial, agricultural, or other uses which are being made of such water.

Contaminant Release and Spill - When an incident results in a material or waste being released into the environment that has the potential to have public health and/or environmental impact. Such incidents should be tracked through the State Duty Officer notification process and be filed with the MPCA or MDA.

Environmental Bore Holes - Environmental Bore Holes definition has changed to Environmental Well, and includes Exploration Test Holes.

Environmental Well - An excavation 15 or more feet in depth that is drilled, cored, bored, washed, driven, dug, jetted, or otherwise constructed to:

- (1) Conduct physical, chemical, or biological testing of groundwater, and includes a groundwater quality monitoring or sampling well;
- (2) Lower a groundwater level to control or remove contamination in groundwater, and includes a remedial well and excludes horizontal trenches; or
- (3) Monitor or measure physical, chemical, radiological, or biological parameters of the earth and earth fluids, or for vapor recovery or venting systems. An environmental well includes an excavation used to: measure groundwater levels, including a piezometer; determine groundwater flow direction or velocity; measure earth properties such as hydraulic conductivity, bearing capacity, or resistance; obtain samples of geologic materials for testing or classification; or remove or remediate pollution or contamination from groundwater or soil through the use of a vent, vapor recovery system, or sparge point.

Eroding Lands & Sedimentation - Erosion is the action of surface processes (such as water flow or wind) that removes soil, rock, or dissolved material from one location on the earth's crust and transports it to another location. Sedimentation is the accumulation or deposition of the eroded materials.

Floodplain - Area of land adjacent to a stream or river which stretches from the banks of its channel to the base of the enclosing topography and which experiences flooding during periods of high discharge.

Groundwater Appropriation Permit - A permit obtained from the MN Department of Natural Resources which is required for all users withdrawing water from groundwater sources more than 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year.



Groundwater Tracer Study - A study tracking the movement and/or velocity of water and potential contaminants which might be transported by the water. Tracers can be dyes, ions, stable isotopes as well as a contaminant that was released from a known location.

Groundwater Contamination - Groundwater contamination occurs when man-made products such as petroleum products, road salts, and chemicals get into the groundwater and cause it to become unsafe and unfit for human use.

Judicial Ditch - Judicial ditches are public drainage systems established through court order, and may be administered either by a single county or multiple counties. Administration of county, joint county, and judicial systems are regulated under Minn. Stat. § 103E (commonly referred to as the drainage code).

Land Cover - Land cover is the physical material at the surface of the earth. The National Land Cover Database (NLCD) provides a land cover classification scheme applied consistently across the United States.

Land Use - Land use is the human use of territory for economic, residential, recreational, conservational, and governmental purposes. It also has been defined as the total of arrangements, activities, and inputs that people undertake in a certain land cover type.

Major Watershed - The entire physical area or basin drained by a distinct stream or riverine system, physically separated from other watersheds by topographic boundaries. There are 81 major watersheds covering Minnesota.

Minor Watershed - The entire physical area or basin drained by a distinct stream or riverine system, physically separated from other watersheds by topographic boundaries. There are approximately 5600 minor watersheds covering Minnesota.

Ordinary High Water Level - An elevation delineating the highest water level that has been maintained for a sufficient period of time to leave evidence upon the landscape, commonly the point where the natural vegetation changes from predominantly aquatic to predominantly terrestrial. For watercourses, the ordinary high water level is the elevation of the top of the bank of the channel. For reservoirs and flowages, the ordinary high water level is the operating elevation of the normal summer pool.

Permitted Withdrawal - A permit obtained from the MN Department of Natural Resources which is required for all users withdrawing water from surface and/or underground sources totaling more than 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year.

Potential Contaminant Source - Any human-related activity that presents a risk to groundwater quality.

Precipitation Gauging Station - An instrument used by meteorologists and hydrologists to gather and measure the amount of liquid precipitation over a set period of time.

Property Audit - Assessments conducted to determine if a property has onsite contamination. The reports produced are Phase 1 or Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments (ESA). Standards for the Phase I and Phase



II ESAs have been established by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) to address the All-Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) aspect to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA).

Public Drainage System - Minnesota's various Chapter 103E drainage system identifiers reflect the different entities that have had drainage authority over the years, including: town ditches, county ditches, state ditches, judicial ditches and watershed district project ditches, all of which can involve open ditches and/or subsurface tile systems. Drainage system identifiers also include laterals or branches of drainage systems.

Public Drainage Ditch - A ditch is a small to moderate depression or linear trench created to channel water. A ditch can be used for drainage alongside roadways or fields, or to channel water from a more distant source for plant irrigation.

Stream flow - Also known as discharge, it is the volume of water that moves through a specific point in a stream during a given period of time. Discharge is usually measured in units of cubic feet per second (cfs).

Water-use Conflict - An occurrence that arises when the available supply of waters of the state in a given area is limited to the extent that there are competing demands among existing and proposed users which exceed the reasonably available waters.

Water Quality Management Classification - The beneficial uses assigned to any waterbody in Minnesota Rules Chapter 7050. The water use classification for specifically listed waters are in MN Rule Chapter 7050.0470 by basin. Waters not listed are classified as class 2B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 5, and 6 waters (7050.0430) unless it is a wetland. Wetland uses are indicated in 7050.0186.

Well Interference - This occurs when a public water supply or domestic well owner loses access to groundwater because a high-volume water appropriation is taking place nearby and water levels recede below the pump of the affected well.

Wetlands - Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Water saturation (hydrology) largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that favor the growth of specially adapted plants (hydrophytes) and promote the development of characteristic wetland (hydric) soils.