

# Hand Dug Well Policy

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate potential public health and physical hazards and sources of groundwater contamination by requiring that all hand dug wells be destroyed.

## II. Authority

**Placer County Code, Section 13.08.010:** *It is the purpose of this article to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the county of Placer by ensuring that the ground waters of this county will not be polluted or contaminated.*

**Department of Water Resources, Water Well Standards: State of California, Bulletin 74-81:** *Statement of the Problem: Wells themselves do not cause ground water quality to deteriorate. Rather, it is inadequate construction, or in the case of wells that no longer serve a useful purpose, their improper destruction, that can result in the deterioration of ground water quality.*

### **California Health and Safety Code, Section 115700 – 115720:**

*(a) Every person owning land ... who knowingly permits the existence on the premises of any abandoned mining shaft, pit, well, septic tank, cesspool, or other abandoned excavation dangerous to persons legally on the premises, or to minors under the age of 12 years, who fails to cover, fill, or fence securely that dangerous abandoned excavation and keep it so protected, is guilty of a misdemeanor.*

*(b) Every person owning land ... who knowingly permits the existence on the premises of any permanently inactive well, cathodic protection well, or monitoring well that constitutes a known or probable preferential pathway for the movement of pollutants, contaminants, or poor quality water, from above ground to below ground, or vertical movement of pollutants, contaminants, or poor quality water below ground, and that movement poses a threat to the quality of the waters of the state, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.*

*(e) At a minimum, permanently inactive wells shall be destroyed in accordance with standards developed by the Department of Water Resources pursuant to Section 13800 of the Water Code....*

## III. Issue

Historically, many properties in Placer County utilized hand dug wells. A hand dug well is not considered a source for potable water supply and can facilitate the impairment of ground water quality regardless of the purpose or use of the well. Hand dug wells are not constructed with features protective of water quality. Hand dug wells are not constructed with an adequate annular seal. When the annular space (the space between the outside of the casing the wall of the hole) lacks an adequate vertical seal and surface water or shallow subsurface water flows into the well along the outside of the casing, this creates a situation where there is deterioration of the groundwater. Additionally, hand dug wells create an entrapment hazard for children and animals.

#### **IV. Policy**

When a hand dug well is encountered by Environmental Health Services through review of a permit application or through complaint investigation, the hand dug well will be required to be destroyed. This destruction will either be required prior to issuance of the permit that was under review or as a condition of approval on the permit application. In the case of a complaint investigation, the well will be required to be destroyed prior to closure of the complaint investigation. The wells must be destroyed under permit with Environmental Health Services and in accordance with the Placer County Well Construction Ordinance.

#### **V. Effective Date**

This policy will become September 1, 2009 after review and approval by the EH Director and EHMT.

Jill Pahl  
Environmental Health Director