

## **Did You Know .....?**

- More than 70% of Minnesotans rely on ground water for drinking water.
- As of 1990, an estimated 483,000 Minnesota residences used private wells to obtain water for their homes.
- As of 1990, there were 2,388 active community public water supply wells in Minnesota.
- In 1995, an estimated 700 million gallons of ground water per day were withdrawn from Minnesota's aquifers (550 million gallons per day were permitted).
- As of 1989, contaminated ground water cost 17 Minnesota cities and 18 Minnesota companies a total of \$67,072,000.
- As of 1994, there were an estimated 700,000 to 1.175 million unsealed, abandoned wells in Minnesota that could potentially serve as contamination pathways to harm Minnesota ground water.
- As of May 1998, 100,000 unused wells have been sealed to protect Minnesota ground water.

## **What is Ground Water?**

"Ground water" is a term used to refer to water beneath the land surface. Ground water may reside in the spaces between earth materials such as sand, silt or clay particles. Where there is rock, ground water can reside in rock openings such as fractures in granite.

Technical note: Ground-water scientists typically restrict the use of the term "ground water" to underground water that can flow freely into a well, tunnel, spring, etc. This definition excludes underground water in the unsaturated zone. The unsaturated zone is the area between the land surface and the top of the ground water. The unsaturated zone is made up of earth materials and open spaces that contain some moisture but, for the most part, this zone is not saturated with water. Ground water is found beneath the unsaturated zone where all the open spaces between sedimentary materials or in fractured rocks are filled with water and the water has a pressure greater than atmospheric pressure.