

What You Should Know Before Buying Property with a Private Water Well

The water source on real estate is a precious resource; however, many purchasers take for granted that the water supply is safe and plentiful, if they think about this at all. Many purchasers are more concerned with the view from the front porch and that there is electricity and internet service available than with the water supply. Many real estate purchasers are from locations where water is from a public water supply and have never had or thought about using a private water well. This fact sheet summarizes a few basic steps to consider when purchasing property with a private water well.

General Information about the Well

When purchasing a piece of property in a rural location ask the questions:

- Is there a water supply on the property and where is that source located?
- Is there only one well on the property or are there multiple wells?
- What are the regulations that affect my well or the use of the groundwater?
- Who or is there a regulating authority of groundwater in the area?
- Are any plugged or capped wells on the property. If so, what condition are they in or have they been properly decommissioned?

If the realtor cannot answer these basic questions, it might be a good idea to look at other properties or find another realtor. When you sell property, you are required to disclose facts about that parcel and as a buyer you want to know about electrical service, phone/internet service and water/sewer services. If that information has not been disclosed, you have the right to ask questions.

Well Location Related to Property Features

- What is the location of the well in relation to property boundaries, septic tanks/septic drain fields, or other possible sources of contamination?
- Is the well on the up-slope side of the septic?
- Is the well located in an area of the property that may be subject to flooding?
- What is the primary use of the water well (domestic and livestock, irrigation)?

Preliminary Inspection

Upon locating the pump house and the wellhead (the portion of the well casing that comes out of the ground and is visible) you should make certain of the following construction components:

- There is no visible water damage in that area.
- There is a concrete slab (approximately a 4 foot square slab) or steel or plastic sleeve surrounding the pipe and that it contains no cracks and is sloping away from the pipe.
- The wellhead is properly sealed so that no environmental contaminants can enter the water supply.

Professional Inspection

It is strongly recommended to have the well inspected by a licensed water well driller or pump installer. Most lenders are requiring a well inspection before a purchase can be made. These inspectors will be able to tell you if the well is properly working and in compliance with the state and local laws and regulations. The inspectors should also be able to give you information on the total well depth, depth to water, where the pump is set, and well yield. You do not want to purchase a non-working well because you may be responsible for having the well plugged. Many lenders also require water quality testing to ensure the water meets drinking water standards. See the below section and resources for more information and guidance on water well testing.

Documentation

You should also ask for a copy of the well report and any water quality testing and maintenance records. The well report will tell you the date of installation, how the well was constructed, total depth, the depth of the pump, and the yield at the time the well was originally drilled. This information along with the current inspection data can inform you of changes to the well over a period time. The well log may be required by the lending company before you can purchase the property and is an important source of information you need to have in your files. In addition, if any water treatment devices or filters will remain with the well, you will need information on the purpose of this equipment and how to maintain it.

Operation and Maintenance

Additionally, you should consider the upkeep and maintenance requirements for owning a private drinking water well in the State of Texas. As an owner or tenant, it is important to understand that groundwater quality sourced from private wells is not regulated by the State of Texas. It is the owner/user's responsibility to conduct water quality testing to ensure the water is safe for domestic use. After the initial water testing is conducted, it is recommended to test the well annually. There are numerous resource documents cited in the section below that provide guidance in determining what constituents to test your well for and how to look up accredited laboratories.

Resources and Useful Links

There are several sources with information about water wells, including the following:

- For information on groundwater conservation districts (GCDs), see the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts website, <https://texasgroundwater.org/> or

- TCEQ's GCD webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/groundwater/groundwater-planning-assessment/districts.html>
- Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation (TDLR) water well information:
 - Information on local well drillers and pump installers, TDLR License Data Search: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/>,
 - *Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers* webpage, <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/wwd/>
 - Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ's) *Environmental Laboratory (NELAP) Accreditation* webpage includes information on laboratories, who may have advice on what to test wells for an how to collect samples: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/qa/env_lab_accreditation.html.
 - TCEQ Water Quality Division directory: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/directory/water_directory.html#waterquality
 - TCEQ webpage, *Finding Information about Water Wells in Texas*, which contains links to TWDB and TCEQ data viewer pages with well records: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/SWAP/wells.html>
 - Texas Well Owner Network (TWON) webpages:
 - *Resources*, <https://twon.tamu.edu/resources/>
 - *Fact Sheets*, <https://twon.tamu.edu/fact-sheets/>. Provides a lot of information on private wells. See Fact Sheets – Private Drinking Water Well Basics and Well Owner's Guide to Water Supply.
 - EPA webpage, *Private Drinking Water Wells*: <https://www.epa.gov/privatewells>. For guidance on owning a private well, see the "Protect Your Well" section, and for other helpful tips and recommendations, see "Private Well Info and Data."
 - Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) *Water Data Interactive* viewer: <https://www3.twdb.texas.gov/apps/WaterDataInteractive/GroundWaterDataViewer>. This viewer allows you to search your property location for water well records in your area.
 - TWDB webpages with information on specific aquifers: <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/aquifer/major.asp> and <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/aquifer/minor.asp>.
 - Information on groundwater quality and sampling: <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/data/index.asp>.

Other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

To find additional FAQs visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <https://tgpc.texas.gov/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.