

**United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Montana**

**Operation and Maintenance Guide
For Your
Water Well Decommissioning**

Operator: _____
 Project: _____ Date: _____
 Farm No. _____ Tract No. _____ Field No. _____
 NRCS Office: _____ Phone: _____
 NRCS Personnel: _____

A properly maintained decommissioned water well site is an asset to your operation. All decommissioned wells may eventually require some degree of maintenance or rehabilitation, regardless of construction methods or materials used. This time span depends upon many factors including:

- * *Aquifer characteristics*
- * *Groundwater quality*
- * *Well design and materials*
- * *Well installation procedures*
- * *Well decommissioning procedures*
- * *Local land use*

Timely maintenance specifically designed for the well decommissioning will sustain performance and decrease the likelihood of groundwater contamination from the installation. This checklist is provided for your convenience in order to help you develop a good maintenance plan.

OPERATION CHECKLIST

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- Keep accurate, detailed records as listed below, which should be filed with the original Montana Well Log Report Form 603 R2-04.
 - Monitor well site, looking for cracks, settlement, dying vegetation or wet spots. Dying vegetation may indicate the escape of gasses from the well and perennial wet spots indicate seepage from artesian aquifers.
 - Check concrete pad and any visible grout seals for cracking or settlement.
 - Check level of fill over decommissioned wells, refill material if necessary to eliminate ponding over the site and promote runoff.

DECOMMISSIONED WELL SITE MAINTENANCE

The most common decommissioned well problems include:

1. Ponding of surface water over the site due to settlement.
2. Improper use of site due to poor record keeping.
3. Continuing seepage from flowing wells due to poor decommissioning practices.
4. Structural collapse of the well casing or screen.

It is necessary to decommission unused water wells to protect water quality and conserve groundwater quantity. The initial and continuing effectiveness of well decommissioning is dependent on keeping detailed, accurate records. The following tables contain the information which should be included in the well’s permanent decommissioning record.

TABLE 1: INFORMATION TO BE PERMANENTLY RECORDED FOR DECOMMISSIONED WELLS	
1.	Name and address of drilling contractor or operator that performed work.
2.	Date well decommissioned.
3.	Location of a permanent reference point and directions from which well location can be determined.
4.	Method of well construction, including the type and dimension of well casing, depth of any casing reductions and casing treatment used in decommissioning.
5.	Montana Well Log Report Form 603 R2-04 and any worksheets used. They should include a diagram showing major design features of the well and location.

MAINTENANCE PLAN

Inspection and routine maintenance schedules should be established, based on the individual characteristics of the decommissioned well site. Periodic inspections are particularly important for high traffic sites and those adjacent to farmsteads, feedlots, and farmed ground.

The evaluation should include a careful, annual inspection of the site with special attention paid to areas of surface water accumulation and runoff, and potential sources of pollutants such as animal wastes and agricultural chemicals, fertilizers, fuels and lubricants. Every few years may be sufficient for low traffic and remote locations. If production wells are located nearby, then they should be checked for contamination on a yearly basis or more often if water use justifies the expense.

