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## **Using an Online Evaluation Tool to Assess Management of Private Water Wells**

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### **Abstract Text:**

Private water systems are prevalent in rural communities throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region. Water wells that are poorly constructed and managed improperly represent a potential risk to vital ground water aquifers and the homeowners that utilize them for drinking water. Unlike public systems, all maintenance, testing, and treatment of private water systems are the voluntary responsibility of the homeowner. For this reason, management of private water supplies is typically neglected unless obvious water quality symptoms occur. In the spring of 2006, researchers at the Pennsylvania State University received funding from the Pennsylvania Water Resources Research Center to develop an online survey that would evaluate private water well management by homeowners throughout Pennsylvania. Using innovative online evaluation tools, surveys were collected and automatically downloaded into a database for analysis. The online survey was advertised to homeowners statewide through Cooperative Extension and various media outlets. Between September 2006 and April of 2007, 865 surveys were collected and analyzed. Each completed survey documented the characteristics of each well including management history, nearby sources of contamination, and well construction. Survey information also provided information about homeowner awareness of water quality issues and homeowner opinions about private water well regulations. Results of the online survey will be discussed and compared to survey results received through the PA Private Water Well Study conducted during 2006 and 2007. Researchers will discuss how others can utilize online evaluation tools for collecting information about private water systems within a specific state.

### **Impact Statement:**

This project was part of a larger research study on private water well management and well water quality. The results have been and will continue to be used in water resource educational programs in Pennsylvania and throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region.