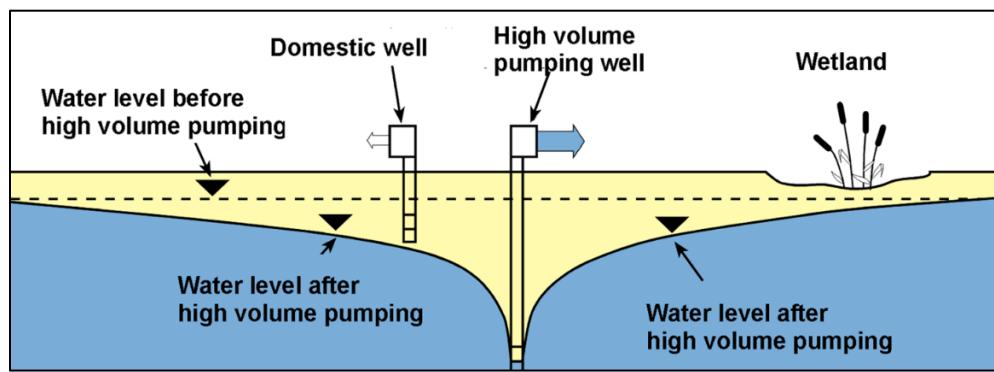


Well interference process

Navigating a well interference complaint

Pumping from a high-capacity well lowers the water level in the surrounding groundwater aquifer. [Well interference](#) occurs when the water level drops below a domestic well pump, so the pump cannot reach or pump water. By law, domestic wells are highest priority for groundwater use. Being without water is inconvenient and can cause damage to well pumps. For the Minnesota DNR to investigate an out-of-water situation, a domestic well owner must have a licensed well contractor (driller) visit the well and complete a [Well Contractor Information Form](#)¹. The domestic well owner must [submit a well interference complaint](#) along with the completed well contractor information form. The DNR determines whether a high-capacity appropriator contributed to the out of water situation and needs to negotiate a settlement with the domestic well-owner. High-capacity groundwater appropriators may include industries, irrigators, public water supplies or quarries.



What is the well interference complaint process?

Domestic well owners and municipal water suppliers who lose access to water and believe the cause is a nearby high-capacity water appropriator can submit a [Well Interference Complaint Form](#) to the DNR. Before the DNR will investigate a well interference complaint, the well owner must have a [licensed well professional](#) visit the well and fill out a [Well Contractor Information Form](#) to evaluate the well's physical condition. After the DNR receives both the complaint form and the well contractor information form, they will either begin an investigation, gather additional information, or dismiss the complaint. The domestic well owner must submit receipts for well inspection, repair, purchased water and any other costs incurred because of the out-of-water situation for these costs to be reimbursed as part of a settlement. The domestic well owner must not seal their well until the DNR investigation is complete.

Technical investigation

After the DNR receives the completed complaint and well information forms, a groundwater specialist will begin investigating the potential connection between the high-capacity pumping and the limited domestic water supply. The groundwater specialist will:

- Contact parties involved to request specific information or data about water use during the past year.
- Analyze the geographic and geologic setting of each well and the aquifer from which it draws water.

¹ These form links direct to online forms, which submit directly to DNR. If you or your contractor uses the PDF or paper version available on the [Well Interference webpage](#), you will need to send it to the DNR via email or USPS.

- Model the amount of drawdown in the domestic well.
- Determine all high-capacity appropriators in the area that may have contributed and systemically exclude them based on the original appropriation date, amount and timing of water pumped, and the aquifer or aquifer system where the well is located.

The investigation may also include an aquifer pumping test in which the high-capacity well would be pumped while water levels in the domestic well(s) involved in the complaint and possibly in other nearby wells are measured. In some cases, the DNR will need additional information for a sound technical investigation.

The DNR considers all of this information to determine the existence and extent of any interference. This process is complex and typically takes three to six months.

DNR Technical Report

The DNR will provide the domestic well owner(s) and the permittee(s) with a report summarizing the facts and findings from the technical investigation. A report either finds the complaint either:

- **Valid:** The high-capacity appropriator contributed to the out-of-water situation, or
- **Invalid:** There is insufficient evidence that the high-capacity appropriator contributed to the out-of-water situation.

Resolution

Where the technical report shows a complaint was valid, [Minnesota Rules 6115.0730](#) provides three options for the high-capacity appropriator to resolve the issue:

- Request that the DNR modify or restrict the permit to provide for an adequate domestic water supply.
- Negotiate a reasonable agreement with the affected well owner(s).
- Request a public hearing.

The high-capacity appropriator may not resume pumping without completing one of these options. Often, the high-capacity appropriator will choose to reimburse the domestic well owner for the costs associated with resolving the situation, which may have included: purchasing water, lowering the pump in the well, replacing the pump, drilling a new well or connecting to a rural water supply.

If the high-capacity appropriator has not negotiated a resolution, requested a permit modification or requested a public hearing within 30 days of the report, then the situation enters a settlement process outlined in [Minnesota Rules 6115.0730](#).

Wells under investigation must not be sealed

[Minnesota Statutes 103G.289](#) requires the DNR to dismiss a complaint if the affected domestic well has been sealed prior to the completion of the DNR's investigation. When drilling a new well is the only water access option available for a domestic well owner, the old well must be sealed after the investigation is complete. The cost of sealing a well can be part of the negotiated settlement if the DNR determines the complaint is valid.

Contacts

Complainants will work with a group of DNR staff including the local area hydrologist, the groundwater hydrologist assigned to the technical review, and the well interference coordinator. Contact your area hydrologist with questions about your out-of-water situation, and the well interference coordinator with questions about the complaint process.

Area Hydrologist: Varies by region- http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area_hydros.pdf

Well Interference Coordinator (process questions): Claudia Hochstein, well.interference.dnr@state.mn.us or 651-259-5034