

**Ripple Effect # 48**  
**Groundwater – 60 seconds**

Water beneath the land surface is called groundwater. Groundwater moves under the ground in the interconnected spaces between soil or rock particles and is stored in an aquifer.

An aquifer is an underground layer of saturated soil or rock that yields significant quantities of water that may be pumped to the surface for use by people or livestock, or for watering crops.

Many cities and factories, as well as many people who live in rural areas, use ground water for drinking and other household uses.

Groundwater can become unusable if it becomes polluted. Water managers and water users are working hard to protect and conserve our groundwater. Because groundwater can be affected by human activities, many communities protect all or part of the lands surrounding their wells. This is called well head protection. Many cities are doing even more – they protect a very large area called a watershed from which they obtain their surface and ground water.

Besides protecting water quality, water managers are making sure that no more water is taken out than can be naturally returned. With careful use and by reducing sources of pollution, groundwater will continue to be a good source of water for Red River Basin residents.

This Ripple Effect is brought to you by the Red River Basin Commission.