

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Well Decommissioning (351)

Well decommissioning involves the sealing and permanent closure of an inactive, abandoned, or unusable water well or monitoring well.

Practice Information

The primary reasons for decommissioning a well are to eliminate hazards to people, animals, and farm machinery and to prevent groundwater contamination from surface water flow. A well can also be decommissioned when it is no longer needed, it cannot be rehabilitated, or it has failed structurally.

All decommissioning activities will be conducted in accordance to applicable local, State, Tribal, and Federal requirements.

As part of the decommissioning process, the well will be cleared of all pumping equipment, pipelines, grease, oil, scum, debris, and other foreign materials. Casings, liners, and screens will be removed, if practical. Use chlorine to disinfect the well, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

A well is plugged by filling it with alternating layers of fill material and sealing materials that restrict movement of water vertically in the well. Grouting may also be used to fill the hole. If the casing is left in place, grout will be used to seal any spaces around the outside of the casing. The top of the well will



be sealed with material that will prevent surface water from entering the wellhead and the soils around the wellhead will be graded to prevent ponding.

The location of the decommissioned well must be clearly identified in the records for this practice. Consider installing a metal “target” in the top of the wellhead seal to make it easy to find with a metal detector.

This practice has a minimum expected life of 20 years. The site must be inspected periodically to ensure there is no settlement around the well or any soil erosion of the surrounding area.

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.

