

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Clarify the Laws Regarding Significant Groundwater Wells

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 38 MRSA §480-B, sub-§9-A, ¶B, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 399, §10, is amended to read:

B. "Significant groundwater well" does not include:

(1) A public water system as defined in Title 22, section 2601, subsection 8 other than any portion of a public water system used solely to bottle water for sale or to provide water to be bottled for sale as determined by the department;

(2) Individual home domestic supply;

(3) Agricultural use or storage;

(3-A) Dewatering of a mining operation;

(4) A development or part of a development requiring a permit pursuant to article 6, article 7 or article 8-A; or

(5) A structure or development requiring a permit from the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission.

Sec. 2. PL 2007, c. 399, §13 is amended to read:

Sec. 13. Transition. If a person who requires a permit for establishment or operation of a significant groundwater well from the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 38, section 480-C is authorized to transport water pursuant to Title 22, section 2660-A on the effective date of this Act September 20, 2007 and applies for a permit for establishment or operation of the significant groundwater well prior to expiration of the water transport authorization, the person may continue to withdraw water until final agency action on the permit application.

For purposes of this section, "significant groundwater well" means any well, wellfield, excavation or other structure, device or method used to obtain groundwater that is a public water system as defined in Title 22, section 2601, subsection 8 other than a public water system used solely to bottle water for sale; for individual home domestic supply; for agricultural use or storage; or for dewatering of a mining operation and is:

1. Withdrawing at least 75,000 gallons during any week or at least 50,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of 500 feet or less from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook; or

2. Withdrawing at least 216,000 gallons during any week or at least 144,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of more than 500 feet from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook.

Sec. 3. PL 2007, c. 399, §14 is amended to read:

Sec. 14. Rulemaking public information meetings. The Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission shall amend their rules to require that a public information meeting be held prior to submission of an application for a significant groundwater well or project including a significant groundwater well unless the project already has a public information meeting requirement. The public information meeting must meet the requirements for public information meetings contained in the Department of Environmental Protection's rule concerning the processing of applications and other administrative matters. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

For purposes of this section, “significant groundwater well” means any well, wellfield, excavation or other structure, device or method used to obtain groundwater that is a public water system as defined in Title 22, section 2601, subsection 8 other than a public water system used solely to bottle water for sale; for individual home domestic supply; for agricultural use or storage; or for dewatering of a mining operation and is:

1. Withdrawing at least 75,000 gallons during any week or at least 50,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of 500 feet or less from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook; or

2. Withdrawing at least 216,000 gallons during any week or at least 144,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of more than 500 feet from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook.

This section applies to a significant groundwater well that requires approval pursuant to Title 12, chapter 206-A or Title 38, chapter 3, article 5-A or 6.

Sec. 4. PL 2007, c. 399, §15 is amended to read:

Sec. 15. Rulemaking independent monitoring; fees. The Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission shall periodically contract with independent environmental professionals to provide a technical review and assessment of monitoring information submitted to the Department of Environmental Protection or the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission related to significant groundwater wells that are part of projects or developments permitted under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, chapter 206-A or Title 38, chapter 3, article 5-A or 6, and each shall through rulemaking develop a fee structure to provide funding for the contracts. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

For purposes of this section, "significant groundwater well" means any well, wellfield, excavation or other structure, device or method used to obtain groundwater that is a public water system as defined in Title 22, section 2601, subsection 8 other than a public water system used solely to bottle water for sale; for individual home domestic supply; for agricultural use or storage; or for dewatering of a mining operation and is:

1. Withdrawing at least 75,000 gallons during any week or at least 50,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of 500 feet or less from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook; or

2. Withdrawing at least 216,000 gallons during any week or at least 144,000 gallons on any day and is located at a distance of more than 500 feet from a coastal or freshwater wetland, great pond, significant vernal pool habitat, water supply well not owned or controlled by the applicant or river, stream or brook.

The Department of Environmental Protection or the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission may exclude certain types of pumping or certain significant groundwater wells or portions of significant groundwater wells from a fee requirement where appropriate based upon considerations such as the applicability of other fees, the type or amount of pumping or the insignificant risk to protected natural resources or other wells.

SUMMARY

This bill clarifies that the definition of "significant groundwater well" in the Natural Resources Protection Act includes public water systems or portions of public water systems that bottle water for sale or provide water to be bottled for sale as determined by the Department of Environmental Protection. The bill also adds dewatering of a mining operation to the definition of "significant groundwater well."

The bill also clarifies 3 unallocated law provisions that address transition language and rule-making requirements concerning public information meetings and fees and a fee schedule intended to support independent assessment of monitoring information.