

## **Brunswick County Wellhead Protection Overlay District Ordinance**

The population of Brunswick County almost doubled from the 2000 census to the 2020 census, making it one of the fastest growing counties in the state, and quoted from a resident, “the ninth fastest growing county in the country.” A business manager there recently stated that there were at least 45 buildings under construction in the area near the coast in the summer of 2023. The infrastructure is under pressure and expanding to support the growth, (i.e. road widening, and sewer and water line expansion). The county operates fourteen wells that at one time were in a relatively undeveloped area along the US Highway 211 corridor near Southport, but that is changing rapidly.

Brunswick County first received approval for its voluntary Wellhead Protection Plan in April of 2013, and has been working recently to update the Plan. As part of their planning effort, the County Board of Commissioners enacted a Wellhead Protection Overlay District Ordinance in May of 2023.

The Purpose and Intent of the Ordinance are as follows:

1. The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners recognizes: (a) that residents of Brunswick County rely on groundwater for a safe drinking water supply, and (b) that certain land uses in Brunswick County can contaminate groundwater particularly in shallow/surficial aquifers.
2. The purpose of the Wellhead Protection Area Overlay District (WPA) is to protect public health and safety by minimizing contamination of the shallow/surficial aquifers, Castle Hayne aquifer, and the Pee Dee aquifer in Brunswick County. It is the intent to accomplish this, as much as possible, by public education and securing public cooperation.
3. Appropriate land use regulations may be imposed, however, which are in addition to these imposed in the underlying zoning districts or in other county regulations.

Examples of prohibited uses within the WHPA include garage service and/or automobile repair/body shops, retail sales that include gasoline/fueling facilities and/or truck stops, laundry, dry cleaning, and carpet cleaning plants, junkyards, wrecking, or salvage yards, mining Operations, Class I & Class II/gravel pits, Underground storage tanks, (except liquid propane gas (LPG) tanks), etc. This list is not exhaustive.

Additional information and maps regarding the county’s ordinance may be found on their website. Link provided: <https://www.brunswickcountync.gov/423/Wellhead-Protection-Zoning-Overlay-Distr>

It is believed that this action is a very proactive one on the county’s part that will protect the resources necessary for continued economic growth and protect the health of the county’s citizens for many years to come. Their ordinance is very transparent and has had the support of local authorities of many small communities in the area and is available for review on their website. It is believed that by setting an example that other communities can follow, their ordinance is a benefit to the entire state and should be recognized.

