



## CITY OF PLAINWELL

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### Plainwell Wins State Award in Protecting our Groundwater

November 27, 2018 – Plainwell city officials recently received the Exemplary Wellhead Protection Program Award from the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

The award was presented at AWWA's Michigan Section's annual conference in Kalamazoo. The award honors the City's wellhead protection efforts since 1994.

"The City is excited to receive this award because it recognizes the contributions many people put forth in protecting our community's water source," said Erik Wilson, Plainwell's city manager.

A Wellhead Protection Program (WHPP) safeguards a community's drinking water, offering best management practices to keep public groundwater supply systems from contamination. The guidelines help communities by identifying areas that contribute groundwater to public water supply systems wells, identifying sources of contamination within that area, and developing methods to minimize the threat.

Unlike many programs, wellhead protection is voluntary and implemented at the local level through the coordination of activities by local, county, regional, and state agencies.

The Exemplary WHPP Award is the first one awarded to the City, according to Bonnifer Ballard, AWWA's executive director.

"This is an important award and I applaud communities like Plainwell that really put an effort into this," Ballard said. "With all the water issues today in Michigan, source water and ground water protection are so important. Water is one of those out of sight, out of mind things and we all take for granted that our source water is going to be clean. It really takes work to make sure that is the case."

The City was recognized for having an innovative program that has included the development of an ordinance to address geothermal wells. The program was also instrumental in testing for PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) before the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) sponsored testing.

Plainwell's program is unique in that it was part of pilot study that led to the formation of the state's WHPP. Since 1994, the city has had three different Department of Public Works superintendents that have maintained and continued the program.

"The City staff, the Wellhead Committee and Fleis & VandenBrink (F&V) engineers have worked on this program for many years," Wilson noted. "And they've been fully dedicated to ensuring our time and resources are spent to continue this important program."

"Plainwell's efforts went beyond the requirements needed to be a diligent water utility," said Brian Rice, F&V's Environmental Group manager. "Their program is based on a sound vision, definable goals, a well-thought-out action plan, implementation of that plan, periodic evaluation and revisions of their source water protection efforts."

"I think the program provides a comprehensive view of our system and provides tools to help protect our most important resource – our water," Wilson added.



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