

GROUNDWATER CATCHMENT PROTECTION ZONES

In order to preserve the quality of drinkable groundwater, Wallonia has various regulatory tools at its disposal. These allow it to demarcate prevention and monitoring zones around water catchments, but also to limit (potentially) polluting activities within these perimeters.

The protection zones are specified by ministerial decree. There are three types: the intake zone (10 m minimum around the installations), the prevention zone (between 35 and 1,035 m around the intake) and the monitoring zone (which covers the whole catchment area).

In the prevention zones approved by ministerial decree, certain types of installations and certain risky activities (modifications to the subsoil, transport, storage and disposal of potentially polluting substances, etc.) may be prohibited, regulated or subject to environmental permits. The water producers carry out studies to define the scope of prevention and identify the protection measures to be implemented. They act in collaboration with the Public Water Management Company (*Société publique de gestion de l'eau - SPGE*) which finances operations by collecting a levy on each m³ of water produced (0.0756 €/m³)¹.

Objectives to be achieved

At the end of 2015, Wallonia had 4 monitoring zones (Spa, Spontin, Chaudfontaine and Stoumont) and 222 prevention zones², almost all of which (97.7%) aim to protect water intended for public distribution. These zones include 512 drinking water intakes out of a total of 1,514, representing approximately 46%³ of the volumes of groundwater withdrawn each year. This coverage rate is expected to increase sharply in the coming years, given the number of cases concerning the demarcation of protection zones under examination (171).

Concrete measures in the field

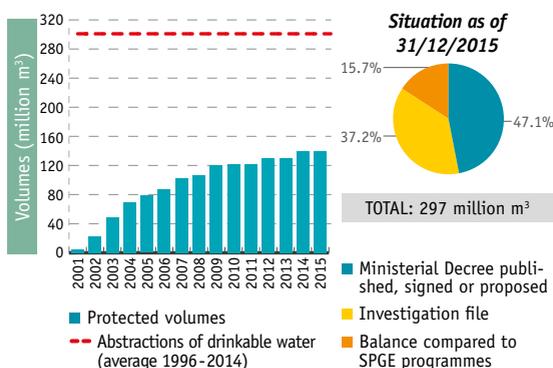
Protection measures for drinking water catchments are wider and more stringent than general groundwater protection measures. In addition to point pollution prevention measures (e.g. management of hydrocarbons risk), the Water Code (*Code de l'eau*) provides for the possibility of adopting adequate and/or strengthened incentives⁴ in areas where drinking water intake can be prevented if pesticide and/or nitrate threshold values in groundwater are exceeded.

Significant investments in the pipeline

Between 2000 and 2015, SPGE invested around €109 million, of which nearly 72% was invested in protection and compliance measures for installations causing point⁵ or diffuse pollution. A new protection programme is under way for the period 2015-2019 for a budget of nearly €59 million, which should make it possible to finalise the demarcation of prevention zones and implement the necessary measures. The works will focus primarily on water intakes which have quality problems due to nitrate and/or pesticides through the development of "catchment contracts"⁶ in order to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive⁷. In 2015, ten catchment contracts were in progress in Wallonia.

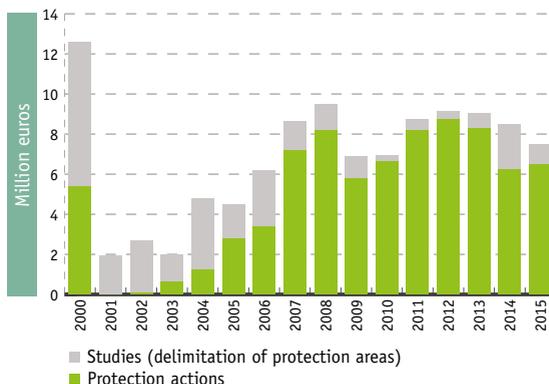
^[1] Programme Decree of 12/12/2014 | ^[2] List of prevention zones: see http://environnement.wallonie.be/zones_prevention | ^[3] Based on an average volume extracted during the period 1996-2014 of 302Mm³ per year | ^[4] Measures up to and including a ban on the application of pesticides responsible for contamination | ^[5] Replacement of 6,966 at-risk hydrocarbon reservoirs over the period 2000-2015 (SPGE, 2016a) | ^[6] River Basin Management Plans 2016-2021: measure 0242_02 | ^[7] Directive 2000/60/EC

Fig. WATER 16-1 Demarcation of protection zones for groundwater catchments in Wallonia (in volumes of drinking water withdrawn)



SOERW 2017 – Sources: SPW - DGO3 - DEMNA; SPW - DGO3 - DEE

Fig. WATER 16-2 Budget for the protection of groundwater catchments in Wallonia



SOERW 2017 – Source: SPGE