



# Guidance for Maintaining Dry Wells



Frederick County Government • Division of Energy and Environment • 30 N. Market St., Frederick, MD 21701 • Sustainability@FrederickCountyMD.gov • 301-600-1416



# What is a Dry Well?

A dry well is a small underground pit filled with gravel that collects stormwater from roof gutters. Rooftop runoff enters a dry well via underground piping that connects the rooftop downspout to the dry well. Then the stormwater absorbs into the surrounding soil. Dry wells are commonly used on residential lots, and some lots may have several dry wells.

Dry wells are typically used to treat small drainage areas (500 sq. ft.). They are not appropriate for treating large areas like parking lots. Most dry wells are buried and grass covered, but they can be easily recognized by a white observation cap that is located about 10-20 feet from the house.



*Leaves and debris are washed out onto the ground keeping your ground pipes flowing freely.*

## Why is it important to maintain your dry well?

### Unmaintained dry wells may:

- Cause flooding on other areas of your property if the stormwater is not able to flow into the dry well (see photo below).
- Cause rainwater to pool on the surface, potentially becoming an insect breeding ground.
- Require replacement of the facility, which can be costly.

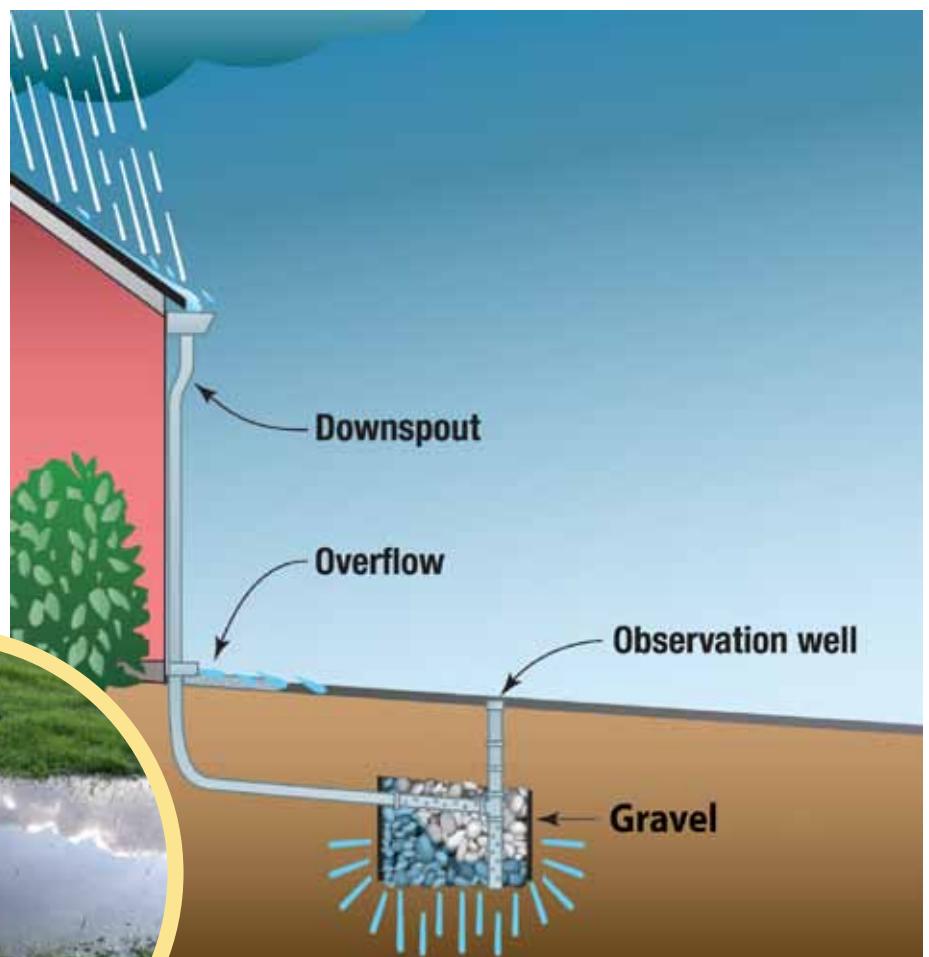


Illustration Credit: Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

# Maintenance 101

## DO...Seasonally/As Needed

- ✓ Inspect your gutters after storms to ensure rain water is draining properly to dry well(s).
- ✓ Ensure observation cap is well fastened.
- ✓ Clean out leaves and other debris from roof gutters.
- ✓ Repair damaged gutters/downspouts.
- ✓ Place gutter guards or screens on top of roof downspouts to prevent leaves and sediment from entering the dry well.
- ✓ Semiannually remove observation well cap and ensure water infiltration is occurring.

## DO NOT...

- ✗ Don't mow over the observation well cap.
- ✗ Don't remove a dry well or reconfigure downspouts to direct water elsewhere.
- ✗ Don't place structures, like decks and sheds, on top of a dry well.
- ✗ Do not allow children to remove observation well caps.



Keep gutters free of debris



Consider installing gutter guards or screens

## TROUBLESHOOTING

SYMPTOM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
Standing water around dry well or at top of observation well pipe.	Standing water longer than 48 hours indicates the dry well or underground piping may be clogged.	The gravel or underground piping may need to be cleaned or replaced.
Rain immediately flowing into overflow downspout at the beginning of a storm.	The underground pipe or buried gravel may be clogged with sediment or debris.	Remove visible blockages in the downspout. Add stones at the overflow downspout to prevent erosion.

## Observation Well



# Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is responsible for maintenance?

As the property owner, YOU or designee are responsible for all maintenance of your dry well. Maintenance of SWM facilities and BMPs is the responsibility of landowners for privately owned lots and the Homeowner's Association (HOAs) for community owned properties.

### Can I remove the dry well(s)?

No, you cannot remove these facilities if they have been required by the county. Frederick County maintains a database of all required stormwater management structures, including dry wells. Frederick County is required to inspect the facilities every three (3) years. Maintenance issues found during inspections are detailed in an inspection report and are required to be addressed within 90 days from the date of notice.

You are doing your part to help protect watershed health, and the water quality of our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay by maintaining your dry well.

### I need help or have questions?

Frederick County staff and inspectors can answer your questions and provide additional guidance about maintaining your dry well(s). Please contact us at [sustainability@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:sustainability@frederickcountymd.gov) or visit [www.frederickcountymd.gov](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov)



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