

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman has declared the week of March 7-13 as Groundwater Awareness Week in Nebraska in recognition of the nationwide significance of the Lincoln-based Groundwater Foundation's work and the vital need to protect groundwater in Nebraska.

Groundwater is the water that fills the cracks, voids and other openings in the soil, sand and bedrock. It's the water we drink—over 85 percent of Nebraskans rely on groundwater for their drinking water. It's the water that grows crops—groundwater is the major source of irrigation.

“Groundwater is a hidden resource that many of us take for granted,” said Groundwater Foundation President Jane Griffin. “So instead of taking it for granted, it is a resource that we must recognize for the vital role it plays in our lives and ensure that a safe, clean supply will be available for our children and grandchildren.”

“This week is also National Groundwater Awareness Week, so it is a perfect time for the governor to make his proclamation and for The Groundwater Foundation to launch its new campaign, “Let's Keep It Clean!”, Griffin said.

“The goal of the campaign is to empower the people of Nebraska to play a key part in protecting their groundwater. The main objectives of the campaign are to create awareness and understanding of the vital resource and provide tools for individual communities to take proactive steps to ensure a safe, lasting supply.”

Here are a few tips to get started:

- Not sure what to do with hazardous substances? Contact local waste authorities about proper disposal of hazardous substances such as pesticides/herbicides, antifreeze, fertilizer, paint/paint thinner, oil and chemicals.

- Use the recommended amounts of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.

- If you own a water well, have the water tested annually. Also test if there is a change in the odor, taste or smell.

- If you own a septic tank, have it cleaned and serviced regularly to prevent a breakdown that could pollute the groundwater.

For more information about groundwater, visit www.groundwater.org.