

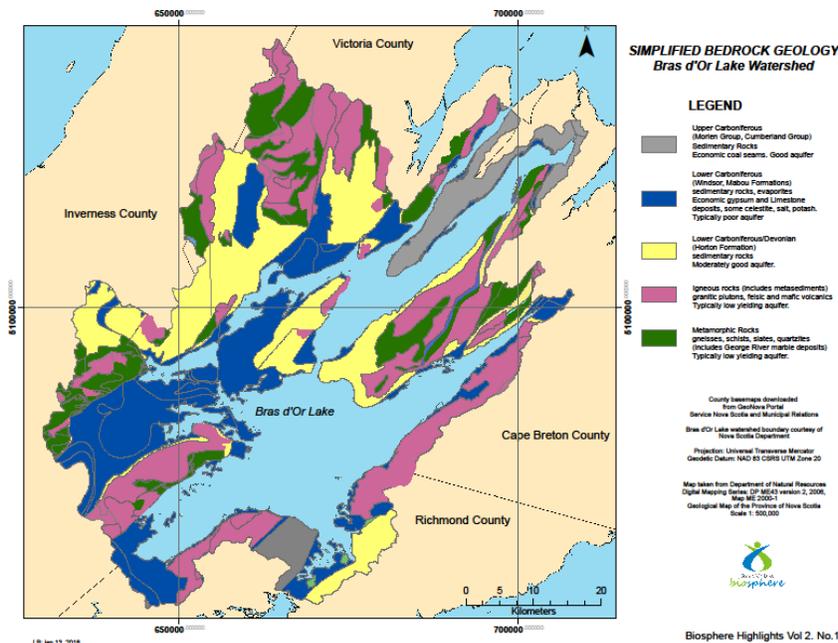
The Local Picture: A Word or Two about Water Supplies

Best Practices' Corner (by Lynn Baechler, M.Sc., Hydrogeologist)

Early in my career with the Department of Environment (NSE) I learned and promoted the following advice: “Before you Build, Before you Buy, Before you Subdivide, determine if you can obtain a water supply.” These days, NSE still advises that you access a suitable potable water supply **BEFORE** you start into the expensive task of building your home. Their publication “Before you Construct a Water Well” can be found at:

www.gov.ns.ca/nse/water/docs/ConstructWell.pdf.

The watershed of the Bras d’Or Lake is underlain by a variety of rock types. Some geologic units (rock types) offer a good potential for water supplies, others not. It seems most folks want to live adjacent to the Lake. These lowland areas are typically underlain by shales, siltstones and sandstones interbedded with limestones, gypsum and some salts. These rocks may, but not always, yield low volumes of poor quality water. Sometimes, salt water intrusion becomes an issue if a well is in close proximity to the shore. As the land raises away from the Lake more resistant rocks (igneous and metamorphic rocks and some conglomerates) are the norm. Depending on the frequency of fractures, a well drilled in these more resistant rocks may yield low to moderate volumes of potable water.



Do not despair, if you love your property and cannot obtain a drilled well near the site for your house; advice from a professional might offer you some hope by suggesting an alternate drilling site on or off your property, the location for a possible dug well (shallow surface well), or they may assist you with incorporating a ‘rainwater harvesting system’ (cistern) into your house design. If you are successful in obtaining water but it is poor quality; treatment options are possible. Either of these scenarios will add to the cost of your domestic water system. It is much better to know these costs ‘up front’ before you start to build your dream home.