4. Ground Water Assessment

As described in Part 2, it is the general policy of DRBC that all ground water of the Basin, as well as surface sources of drinking water, should not exceed maximum contaminant levels (MCL) given in the National Primary Drinking Water Standards. Because this report focuses on the mainstem of the Delaware River, the reader is directed to the 2004 water quality assessment reports of each of the four Delaware River Basin States for an update on groundwater quality management programs and any ground water-related issues.

Some general ground water issues that are occurring in the Basin, as of the writing of this report, are as follows:

- Superfund sites - A number of these sites exist in the Basin and contribute to localized groundwater contamination. Remediation activities are ongoing throughout the Basin.
- Mercury - Natural sources exist in some geologic formations in the Basin. More importantly, air deposition of mercury from combustion activities is an issue.
- Saltwater intrusion - In areas near the Delaware Bay, pumping of groundwater leads to migration of saltwater into the aquifers that supply water for drinking and other needs.
- Naturally occurring substances - Some areas have naturally high levels (due to local geology) of radioactivity, arsenic or other substances that may require additional treatment or preclude them from serving as drinking water sources