

Improving domestic well stewardship in North-Central Oregon

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Local public health professionals, other local organizations involved in drinking water/groundwater management.

ABSTRACT: Background: Outside the city of The Dalles, most of North Central Public Health District's jurisdiction (Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam counties) gets their drinking water from a private well. As of now, the only time that domestic wells are required by law to undergo testing for harmful bacteriologic and chemical contaminants is during real estate transactions. Much of the private property in NCPHD's jurisdiction is passed down by family, and therefore many domestic wells have never been tested or haven't been tested in many years.

Methods: NCPHD received a grant from the Domestic Well Stewardship Program at OHA to enhance domestic well stewardship in our counties. We chose to use the funding to devise and implement a program to subsidize water quality testing for private well owners, particularly focusing on vulnerable populations.

Results/outcomes: The program is currently underway and will conclude at the end of the funding period in August.

Conclusions/Implications: By increasing public knowledge about the benefits of water quality testing and eliminating barriers to testing, NCPHD is enhancing domestic well stewardship by increasing the number of private well owners who are aware of the quality of their drinking water.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Identify common contaminants in well water and the current process for testing for them.
- Discuss opportunities and challenges associated with administering a well water testing program in a geographically large rural/frontier region.
- Describe the aggregated results and what they mean for groundwater quality in North Central Oregon.

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