

Protecting Minnesotans' Drinking Water



THE PROBLEM

Approximately 1.2 million Minnesotans get their drinking water from private wells. In Southeastern Minnesota, the EPA estimates that 9,200 Minnesotans rely on drinking water from private wells that are at or above the federal health limit for nitrate. **The EPA has issued a mandate to Minnesota to take further actions to safeguard public health in Southeastern Minnesota, with a focus on private well owners.**

Unlike public water systems, which are required to regularly test their water supply and treat it if it nears unsafe contaminant levels, private well owners are largely on their own to protect their drinking water. Consuming nitrate-contaminated drinking water can cause a dangerous blood disorder called methemoglobinemia, and has been linked to an increased risk for certain types of cancer and pregnancy complications. **It's critical that the Legislature continues to act on mitigating nitrate contamination to make sure all Minnesotans have access to clean drinking water.**

PRIVATE WELL MITIGATION SF1183/HF821

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) supports SF1183/HF821 the Nitrate Private Well Mitigation Appropriation Act, authored by Senator Gustafson (Xiong, Nelson, Putnam, Miller) and Representative Jacob (Anderson P.H., Vang, and Pursell). The bill would invest \$3.866 million per year in private well mitigation in Southeast Minnesota.¹ This is in line with the Governor's Budget Recommendation for last fiscal year, which called for \$4 million for private well mitigation.

For homes with private wells where nitrate levels exceed the federal standard of 10mg/L, the bill would provide funds for:

- reverse osmosis
- well repair
- well reconstruction

The bill prioritizes funds for the most vulnerable populations and those with income-based need.

¹ General fund money would be limited to private drinking water wells in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, or Winona County.

Eligible Counties to receive Private Well Mitigation under SF1183/HF821



NITRATE CONTAMINATION - A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

In April 2023, MCEA and 10 other organizations filed a petition to the EPA and asked for their help to accelerate Minnesota's response to nitrate-contaminated drinking water in Southeastern Minnesota. Since then, Minnesota has made some notable progress, expanding access to free water quality tests and home water treatment for impacted residences, and strengthening permits for the largest feedlots in the state.

Legacy Finance Bill: Clean Water Fund appropriation of \$6 million over the next biennium (\$3 million each year) for a Private Well Initiative that will fund education, outreach, a well inventory and private well testing.

SF1183/HF 821: Private Well Mitigation, money for homes with private wells where the water exceeds the federal standard of 10 mg/L. Covers reverse osmosis home treatment, well repair and reconstruction.

Other critical investments from the 2024 legislative session include soil health grants, loan programs for specialized equipment, conservation easements, manure management grants, and a program to monitor nitrate in surface waters.



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