

Tuesday, March 26, 2019



RE: **HF 1314** (Lippert) – Source water protection

To the Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division:

I write today in support of HF 1314. This bill proposes to build upon the expectation that every Minnesotan has access to safe drinking water.

Most drinking water in Minnesota is safe for consumption, especially when that drinking water passes through some sort of public treatment system. The federal Safe Drinking Water Act (established in 1974) helped communities in Minnesota and in all 50 states address some of the most common contamination concerns with publicly sourced drinking water – including contaminants from both anthropogenic and naturally occurring sources.

However, the federal Safe Drinking Water still does not address all types of contamination in drinking water, and HF 1314 takes steps towards addressing contaminants in surface waters used for drinking and in drinking water sourced from privately owned wells.

HF1314 requires two pilot projects to monitor contaminants upstream from one or more municipal water supplies that use surface waters (either lakes or rivers) for public drinking water. These pilots are important because surface waters are susceptible to greater environmental exposure when compared to groundwater. Surface waters are more likely to be exposed to contaminants of emerging concern; a broad umbrella term for contaminants including pharmaceuticals, wastewater compounds, agricultural and industrial residues, and more. The federal Safe Drinking Water Act does require regulation of about 90 of the most common contaminants, but sources of surface water used for drinking water can be exposed to contamination from chemicals beyond those 90 regulated contaminants.

Another area that HF1314 will help address is contaminants found in private drinking water wells. Elevated nitrate contamination in private wells can come from anthropogenic sources like sewage disposal, livestock production and crop fertilizers. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has been operating a Township Testing Program to assess nitrate contamination in private wells. As of March of 2018, MDA had tested 25,652 wells from 242 townships with vulnerable aquifers. Of those 25,652 wells tested, 2,583 private wells exceeded the Health Risk Limit for nitrate contamination of 10 mg/L. HF1314 will expand the resources available to those well owners whose drinking water may be affected by vulnerable aquifers. Additionally, HF1314 requires the Department of Health to prepare new policy to protect those citizens who may be impacted by a vulnerable aquifer.

On behalf of Conservation Minnesota members across the state, I ask for your support of HF1314.

Sincerely,  
Nels Paulsen