



October - December 2024 Update Summary

ADDRESSING NITRATE IN SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

This document summarizes work Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) completed between October – December 2024 and is based on the [October – December 2024 <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202501.pdf>](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202501.pdf). Please reference that report for additional details.

Phase II: Public Health Intervention

Note: MDH and MDA completed Phase I work during the previous quarter, and agencies have fully transitioned into Phases II and III.

Phase II work began in July 2024 and will continue throughout the duration of the effort. Notable accomplishments include:

- **Well test kits:** On December 20, 2024, MDH in collaboration with Southeastern Minnesota Water Analysis Laboratory (SEMWAL) made well test kits available to any private well user in the eight-county area (Olmsted, Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Wabasha, and Winona counties). Well users in that area can [request a private well test kit](#) online. Test kits were previously limited to households with babies and pregnant people.
 - *January – December 2024: 66 eligible households requested and received a well test kit. 24 households who received test kits returned them and received water test results.*
 - *As of January 29, 2025: 685 test kits have been requested.*
- **Mitigation:** MDA along with Olmsted Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), is providing reverse osmosis (RO) systems for eligible well owners in southeast Minnesota. In October, the first RO systems were installed, at no cost, for households that have elevated nitrate or cyanazine in their drinking water well. At the end of December, eligibility was broadened, and the water treatment system application was updated to allow for any eligible well owner to apply if they have a valid nitrate-nitrogen test result from a certified laboratory above the Health Risk Limit of 10 mg/L (ppm). **A total of 104 RO systems were installed by December 31, 2024.**
- **Well inventory:** MDH met with staff and leadership from local county agencies who work with private wells to discuss well inventory minimum requirements, strategies to increase knowledge about where private wells are located, funding availability, and capacity to do well inventory work.
- **Outreach:** MDH continued education and outreach including free private well testing outreach through local partners, fulfilled educational materials requests (five requests, 565 brochures mailed), and development of the Buying and Selling a Home with a Private Well brochure.

- **Engagement:** MDH engaged Tap-In, SEMWAL, Petitioners/NGOs, and other concerned citizens.

Phase III: Long-Term Nitrate Goals and Strategies

Phase III work is done by MPCA and MDA and is focused on developing relationships and strategies. Notable accomplishments this quarter include:

- The **nitrate task force**, made up of a variety of local partners to address nitrate in southeast Minnesota continued to meet monthly (with a one-month hiatus in October to allow time for crop harvest). The November and December meetings focused on continuing to build a shared understanding of the nitrate issue, with a focus on impacts to public water systems and private wells, and the human health effects of nitrate.
- A **Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS)** special session was held during the Water Resources Conference on October 16. Reid Christianson (MDA), Matt Drewitz (MPCA), Marco Graziani (MPCA), Carl Rosen (University of Minnesota), Dave Wall (MPCA), and Julie Westerlund (Board of Water and Soil Resources) shared the various components of the NRS revisions with an audience of about 60 and facilitated a discussion and question/answer time.
- In 2024, nearly 1,000 people were informed of the science and research supporting the NRS revisions through public outreach events.
- MPCA continued other work to address nitrate in drinking water aquifers including feedlot permits, wastewater nitrogen reduction, and karst protection strategies.
- MDA is accelerating the implementation of the **nitrogen fertilizer management plan** in southeast Minnesota. During this reporting period, two townships (Preble Township in Fillmore County and Spring Grove Township in Houston County) were selected for initial work, and partner meetings have started. MDA is developing contracts with local partners and developing and implementing workplans.

Additional Resources

[Response to Nitrate in Southeast Minnesota \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/nitratesemn\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/nitratesemn)

[Work Plan: Addressing Nitrate in Southeast Minnesota \(PDF\)
\(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/epaworkplan.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/epaworkplan.pdf)

[Request a Private Well Test Kit
\(https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=3HNK8H3N33TTR479\)](https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=3HNK8H3N33TTR479)

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