



July-September 2024 Update Summary

ADDRESSING NITRATE IN SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

This document provides summary of work completed by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) from July – September 2024 and is based on the [July-September 2024 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202410.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202410.pdf). Please reference that report for additional details.

Phase I: Immediate Response

Phase I work continued during this quarter. Notable accomplishments include:

- Free testing and mitigation offered to households with babies under 1 or pregnant people living in the home. As of September 30:
 - 48 eligible households requested and received a well test kit.
 - 17 households who received test kits returned them and received water test results.
 - Five households with nitrate levels above 10 mg/L signed up to receive bottled water.
- Outreach to private well users via our webpage, sharing through local partners community meetings, and paid social media.
- MDA sent information about drinking water treatment systems to around 1,200 well owners who participated in an MDA well testing program and have elevated nitrate or cyanazine in their well water. About 320 well owners responded with interest in treatment.
- Two contractors were awarded the bid to install reverse osmosis treatment systems in homes with water testing above 10 mg/L within the eight-county area. Olmsted SWCD will connect homeowners with contractors to install the systems, at no cost to the homeowner.

Phase II: Public Health Intervention

Phase II kicked off this quarter with staff focusing on building relationships, data gathering, and planning. Notable accomplishments include:

- MDH engaged with concerned parties to develop and maintain partnerships including: TAP-IN, Southeast Minnesota Water Analysis Lab (SEM WAL), Petitioners/NGOs, and other concerned citizens
- MDH developed contracts with SEM WAL to expand staff capacity and broaden eligibility for free testing to include all private well users in the eight-county area. Expanded testing will be available last quarter of 2024.

- MDA developed a contract with Olmsted County to broaden eligibility for free mitigation for private well water testing over 10 mg/L in the eight-county area. Expanded mitigation will be available last quarter of 2024.
- [Private Wells in Southeast Minnesota \(https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/private-wells-in-southeast-mn\)](https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/private-wells-in-southeast-mn) data visualization was developed and shared on MDH’s website. Additional data and information will be added as it becomes available.

Phase III: Long-Term Nitrate Goals and Strategies

Phase III work done by MPCA and MDA focused on developing relationships and strategy development. Notable accomplishments include:

- State agencies and local partners developed and kicked off a working group made up of a variety of local partners to address nitrate in southeast Minnesota.
- 250 people attended an outreach webinar held by MPCA to discuss updating Minnesota’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy. Working groups have started work to revise the strategy.
- MDA has been planning and accelerating work in high nitrate townships in southeast MN. This includes outlining an approach for direct outreach to landowners, communication and coordination with local partners, which is all leading up to on-farm walkovers and supporting adoption of practices to protect groundwater.
- MPCA continued other work to address nitrate in drinking water aquifers including: feedlot permits, feedlot rules, wastewater nitrogen reduction and karst protection strategies, and fish kill prevention recommendations.

Additional Resources

[Response to EPA Nitrate Letter for Southeast Minnesota \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/nitrate/semn.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/nitrate/semn.html)

[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)

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