



July - September 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 July through September and is based on the [July – September 2025 Report](#).

Phase II: Public Health Intervention

Note: MDH and MDA have completed Phase I work. Agencies have fully transitioned into Phases II and III.

Private Well Testing

Well test kits are available at no cost to any private well user in the eight-county area (Olmsted, Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Wabasha, and Winona counties) through Southeastern Minnesota Water Analysis Laboratory (SEMWAL). Well users in that area can [request a private well test kit](#) online. Since the beginning of the response – September 30, 2025:

- **2,315 eligible households requested** a test kit.
- **1,381 households who received test kits returned them and received water test results.**
- Approximately **seven percent** of wells tested had a nitrate concentration of 10 mg/L or more (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of private wells above the action level for each contaminant (all time).

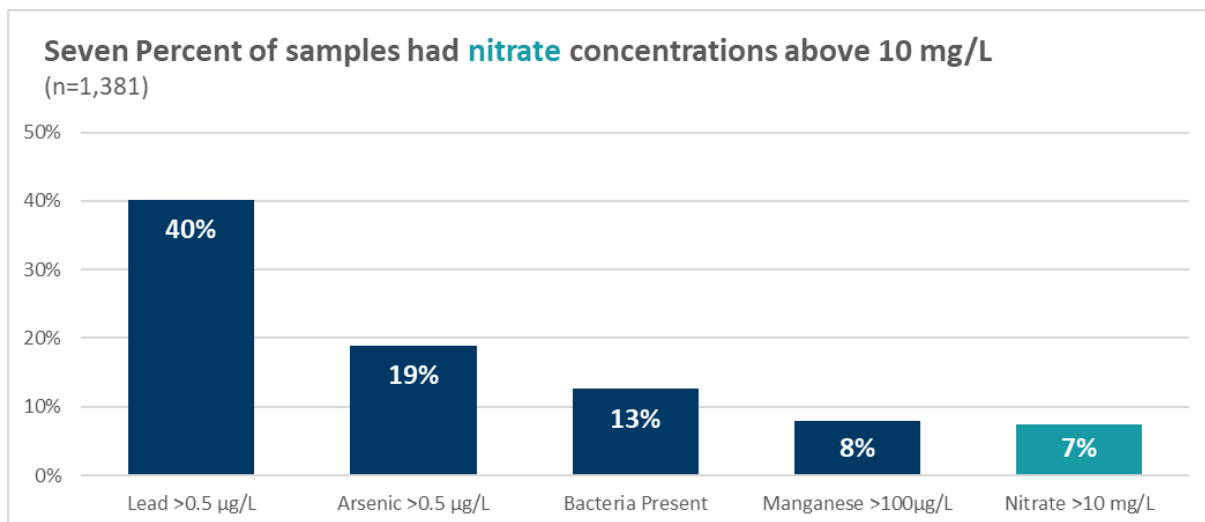


Table 1: Sample kits analyzed by county (all time).

County	Dodge	Fillmore	Goodhue	Houston	Mower	Olmsted	Wabasha	Winona	Grand Total
Kits Tested	86	68	96	65	122	417	206	318	1381

Mitigation

MDA along with Olmsted Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), is providing reverse osmosis (RO) systems at no cost for eligible households in southeast Minnesota. Households may apply if they have a valid nitrate test result from a certified laboratory above the Health Risk Limit of 10 mg/L (ppm). As of September 30, 2025:

- **226 RO systems installed.**

Table 2. Reverse osmosis Installations by county (all time)

County	Dodge	Fillmore	Goodhue	Houston	Mower	Olmsted	Wabasha	Winona	Total
ROs Installed	10	37	32	33	12	12	31	57	226

Well inventory

MDH is continuing to work with each county individually to develop strategies and contracts to complete the well inventory that meet each county's needs. This work is being done strategically in a phased approach to address differing funding and capacity at each county. All eight counties expressed interest in a grant to increase the number of wells in the well inventory. Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, and Wabasha County partners have approved contracts and have started work.

- **789 wells have been identified** for addition to the County Well Index.

Outreach

MDH continued education and outreach including free private well testing outreach through local partners, fulfilled educational materials requests, and engaged with Tap-In, SEMWAL, Petitioners/NGOs, and other concerned citizens. A notable example of these outreach efforts was a campaign led by Tap-In, which partnered with the advertising agency Townsquare Media to produce and distribute promotional content. This campaign included advertisements on YouTube and Facebook, as well as television commercials during sporting events and local news. Another notable effort was partnering with a local electric co-op which ran an article about the program. Over 130 requesters mentioned the newsletter as the way they heard about the test kit opportunity.

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 held an open house in July where agency leadership showed appreciation for the work group members, and two work group members spoke to their experience serving on the group. The group has finalized the [Report of Recommendations: Southeast Minnesota Nitrate Strategies Collaborative Work Group](#).
- All content for the 2025 **Nutrient Reduction Strategy** (NRS) updates was completed and shared with external contractors for editing and formatting at the end of June. The final document consists of eight chapters and an executive summary documenting the progress in nutrient reduction across Minnesota since 2014, evaluation of where more work is needed to meet nutrient reduction goals, and a prioritization of the best methods to implement to achieve water quality goals.
- The Request for Comments (RFC) for Feedlot rulemaking was published March 24, 2025, and the comment period closed July 22, 2025. The agency received more than 1,000 comments and petition signatures and nearly 7,500 pages of comments and attachments in response to this RFC period. MPCA will now move into the rule development stage of rulemaking. MPCA will provide additional opportunities to engage in the rulemaking process over the next two years.
- MDA has accelerated the implementation of the **nitrogen fertilizer management plan** in southeast Minnesota. Two high nitrate townships (Preble Township in Fillmore County and Spring Grove Township in Houston County) were the focus of initial outreach and field work this spring. Those efforts resulted in the development of over 20 conservation projects, most of which are in the process of applying for federal EQIP dollars to assist with implementation. MDA staff has also started work in four additional Houston County townships that had 10% or more of the tested wells above the health risk limit of 10 mg/L. This work is focused on working with feedlot operators to ensure proper nitrogen crediting of manure and legumes. Preliminary outreach efforts at the township level have shown that insufficient crediting of manure and legumes has been an area where many producers can improve. Through this effort, MDA is offering free manure sampling and manure spreader calibration for producers in the Houston County townships of Black Hammer, Caledonia, Mayville, Spring Grove, and Wilmington. The Houston County feedlot officer is partnering in these efforts by providing weigh scales for this effort. In addition, MDA has a JPA with three SE MN SWCDs (Fillmore, Winona, and Wabasha) to provide additional support for feedlot operators operating land in the Altura, Elgin, and Utica DWSMAs along with the high nitrate townships located in Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Wabasha, and Winona Counties. MDA is one year into a two-year agreement with the three SWCDs to ramp up efforts that aim to improve manure crediting, assist with nutrient management

plans, and close communication gaps between local fertilizer retailers and livestock producers to help ensure nitrogen BMPs are being followed in these areas. This type of work will continue into 2026.

Additional Resources

[July – September 2025 Update](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202510.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitupd202510.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>)

[MP+G \(https://www.mpgmarketingsolutions.com\)](https://www.mpgmarketingsolutions.com)

[Report of Recommendations: Southeast Minnesota Nitrate Strategies Collaborative Work Group \(https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-gen1-19.pdf\)](https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-gen1-19.pdf)

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