

# The Network News

A Newsletter for the SE MN Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network

SE MN Water Resources Board • <http://news.winona.edu/semnwrbl/> • Phone (507) 328-7051

## History of the SE MN Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network

### What is the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network and how has it changed over the years?

The SE MN Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network was developed in the early 2000's to create a network of volunteers that contribute well water samples for a long-term study on ground water quality. The results from these samples help provide information for us to gain a better understanding of long-term nitrate trends in drinking water in SE MN. The monitoring network you are part of has been successfully contributing data for nearly 10 years.

Because of the great success and contributions by our volunteers, numerous state agencies have seen the value in maintaining the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network. Over the years, the SE MN Water Resources Board has collaborated with and has received grant funds from the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN Department of Health, MN Department of Agriculture, and the MN Pollution Control Agency, which has allowed for the long-term success of this network. With assistance from the MN Department of Agriculture the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network will continue through 2019.

*The Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network is a low-cost, sustainable means of obtaining long-term trend data for nitrate occurrence in private drinking water supply wells.*

Testing methods and objectives have evolved since the beginning of the study. For the first few years sampling was done twice annually with samples being sent directly to county staff. Local staff then tested the water using a Hach 4000 Nitrate Analyzer. In certain years, additional analytes (e.g. arsenic, trace metals, ammonium) were tested for in a subset of the network which required the use of a certified testing

lab and, in some cases, volunteers were asked to submit additional samples or have a county staff person collect them at their residence. Since 2008, a certified lab has been used for all samples in the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network and has included testing for additional analytes. Currently, samples are requested from our volunteers once per year and are mailed directly to the Southeastern Minnesota Water Analysis Laboratory (SEM WAL) located in Rochester MN. Measuring nitrate levels is still the project objective but we now include measurements of fluoride, chloride, nitrite, and sulfate at no cost to the volunteer. Results from the samples

are sent to our volunteers directly from the SEM WAL lab. Lab staff, as well as your local well network coordinators, are available to help you understand your results if you have questions or concern.

If you have been a volunteer from the very beginning, you might have noticed a few different names used for the network. In the beginning the project was called the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network. In 2013 the name was changed to the Southeast Minnesota Domestic Well Network to reflect changes in sampling objectives and partner agencies. It has also recently been called the SE MN Well Monitoring Network. To maintain historical constancy this group will continue to be addressed as the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network. We greatly appreciate your willingness to contribute to this network over the many years and through its different phases.

### **Well construction information is vital.**

Information about your well, including when and how it was constructed, provides us valuable information to better understand your test results. Analysis from previous years' data have correlated high nitrate wells over the Health Risk Limit of 10 ppm (parts per million) to those that were drilled before the Minnesota Well Code, established in 1974. If you have not had this information filled out by a county staff person, please contact us so your local well network coordinator can gather this important information.

*Please fill out the updated consent form in your test kit this year, even if you have been a long-term volunteer. With the MDA now providing funding for the network we would like to have an updated form on file. The*

### **Volunteer Open Houses**

To thank you for your participation in the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network you will be invited to the annual volunteer open house. An invitation will arrive in the mail once a location and date is determined. These open houses are a great opportunity to meet other volunteers, enjoy a snack, and learn how our testing results are being used.

*MDA consent form offers more privacy protection for your personal information.*

### **Have you received multiple requests for water samples from your well?**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is currently in the processes of conducting a separate study to assess nitrate-nitrogen concentrations in private wells at the township scale as part of the state's Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan. The well sample you submit for this study is separate from the Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network study but your participation in both studies is greatly appreciated.

If you reside in Goodhue, Rice, or Fillmore County you may have received a sample request from the MDA in 2017. In 2018, Houston County residents may receive a sample request for the Township Testing Program.

For more information on this program please visit <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/townshiptesting> or contact your local well network coordinator.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions about this program, please feel free to call your County Well Network Coordinator or Bridgette at (507) 328-7051

#### **County Well Network Coordinator:**

Dodge: 507-635-6273  
Fillmore: 507-765-3878  
Goodhue: 651-923-5286  
Houston: 507-724-5261  
Mower: 507-434-2603  
Olmsted: 507-328-6396  
Rice: 507-333-3871  
Wabasha: 651-565-4673  
Winona: 507-457-6522