



January – March 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 January – March and is based on the [January – March 2025 Report](#).

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:** 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 (SEM WAL). Well users in that area can [request a private well test kit](#) online. Since the beginning of the response – March 31, 2025:
 - 1,383 eligible households requested a test kit.
 - 523 households who received test kits returned them and received water test results.
 - Approximately **11 percent** of wells tested had a nitrate concentration of 10 mg/L or more (Table 1).

Table 1. Analyte measurements for test kits analyzed by county and total (all time).

| County | # of Kits Analyzed | Nitrate > 10 mg/L | Bacteria Present | Arsenic > 0.5 µg/L | Lead > 0.5 µg/L | Manganese > 100 µg/L | Test Kits Requested |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Dodge | 17 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 86 |
| Fillmore | 23 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 78 |
| Goodhue | 31 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 112 |
| Houston | 23 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 0 | 69 |
| Mower | 46 | 4 | 4 | 31 | 16 | 17 | 143 |
| Olmsted | 85 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 27 | 8 | 310 |
| Wabasha | 87 | 11 | 15 | 16 | 41 | 6 | 206 |
| Winona | 211 | 19 | 16 | 25 | 97 | 6 | 379 |
| Total | 523 | 57 | 58 | 97 | 221 | 41 | 1383 |
| Percent | | 11% | 11% | 19% | 42% | 8% | 38% Return Rate |

- **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-nitrogen test result from a certified laboratory above the Health Risk Limit of 10 mg/L (ppm).
 - *A total of 164 RO systems were installed by March 31, 2025.*
- **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, and Houston County partners have developed workplans, and Dodge County has an approved contract and can start work.
- **Outreach:** MDH continued education and outreach including free private well testing outreach through local partners, fulfilled educational materials requests, promoted private well testing through Groundwater Awareness Week, and engaged with 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. The [Addressing nitrate in southeastern Minnesota web page](#) is regularly updated with the work group's progress.
- A **Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS)** webinar was held on March 21, 2025, to demonstrate tracking and data visualization tools the MPCA uses to track nutrients and government-funded best management practices installed across the state. Over 220 people attended, and plans for the NRS Dashboard were laid out. A [recording](#) is available on the MPCA YouTube channel.
- MPCA continued other work to address nitrate in drinking water aquifers including feedlot permits, wastewater nitrogen reduction, and karst protection strategies. Feedlot Nutrient Management Tool (NMT) training events were held in four communities with over 50 attendees.
- MDA is accelerating 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) are the focus of initial work, and partner meetings are underway.

Additional Resources

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

JANUARY – MARCH 2025 UPDATE SUMMARY

January – March 2025 report

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/nitasm202504.pdf>)

Work Plan: Addressing Nitrate in Southeast Minnesota (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>)

Addressing nitrate in southeastern Minnesota (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/addressing-nitrate-in-southeastern-minnesota>)

Minnesota Department of Health
Water Policy Center
625 North Robert Street
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
507-206-2735
health.privatewells@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 507-206-2735.