

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Following a well water testing event held in Clifton, Oak Grove, and River Falls townships this summer, Pierce County's Land Conservation and Public Health Departments held a well water community education event on October 3rd for nearly 70 residents at the River Falls Library.



Kevin Masarik, Groundwater Education Specialist from the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, presents to a full house

The testing this summer was conducted to better understand the overall quality of wells and groundwater in Pierce County and to support homeowners in learning more about their well water quality. "Well water quality is important to our health, so homeowners should be testing their wells annually," says Michele Williams, Pierce County's Lead Environmental Health Specialist. "The presence of contaminants in well water can lead to gastrointestinal illness, reproductive problems, and neurological disorders."

Over 250 wells were tested through the event, which offered a 50% discount to participating homeowners. "This is the first time there's been a large scale testing event in Pierce County since the late 1980s," said Rod Webb, Pierce County Land Conservation Director. "We are hoping that Pierce County leadership continue to support us in conducting similar testing events in other areas of the county over the next few years."

Kevin Masarik, Groundwater Education Specialist, from the University of Wisconsin Stevens Points Water and Environmental Analysis Lab was on hand to share the results of the well

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water testing at the event on October 3rd. The most important topics related to health discussed at the event were maintaining and inspecting your well, bacteria, and nitrates. Private well are not required to be tested, therefore, it's important for homeowners to test on an annual basis. Bacteria present in well water may indicate there is an issue with the well. Nitrates present in ground water may indicate a failed septic system or other possible contamination sources. A copy of Mr. Masarik's presentation can be found on Pierce County Public Health's webpage under Publications and Data.

The average nitrate level for the Clifton, Oak Grove, and River Falls townships was 5.8mg/L, the state average is 3.6mg/L. The standard safe level of nitrates in the water supply is less than 10gm/L. Forty four wells, or 17%, tested exceeded 10mg/L. The state average is 14% of wells exceeding 10mg/L. Twenty-seven percent of wells tested positive for coliform bacteria. The state average is approximately 25%, but this percentage is highly variable as it is season and weather dependent.

When a well has concerning testing results, Masarik recommended owners visually inspect the area surrounding the well and well cap to ensure there is no vegetative overgrowth. Owners should re-test the well and/or disinfect the well if coliform bacteria are present. Nitrates pollutants could possibly be from animal, fertilizer, or human waste. Nitrates in well water may possibly indicate improperly maintained septic drain fields, improper fertilizer practices or improper farming practices.

For more information about well water testing and ground water quality, Visit:

WI DNR's website <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells>

UW-Stevens Point Water & Environmental Analysis Lab <https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/watershed/Pages/WellWaterViewer.aspx>

WI Department of Health Services <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht/index.htm>

Call Pierce County Public Health Department at (715) 273-6755 or Land Conservation at (715) 273-6763 for more information. END



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