

## Safe Drinking Water for Private Well Users Assistance Program

### Background Information

Private well owners in Olmsted, Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona, Fillmore, and Houston Counties are eligible for financial assistance to address drinking water quality concerns in their private wells. The safe drinking water for private well users' assistance program provides funding to eligible landowners or renters to replace, reconstruct, or treat drinking water supplies that are contaminated with nitrate-nitrogen. Olmsted, Goodhue, Wabasha, Fillmore, and Root River (Houston) Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Winona County were provided funding through the Minnesota Department of Health's [Clean Water Funds](#) to facilitate the program. Well owners that meet the financial hardship criteria, and the well eligibility requirements outlined below will be prioritized for funding. The private water supply must be used as a source of potable drinking water for the residence to qualify for financial assistance. Funding will be made available on a first come, first served basis.

### How Well Impairment and Financial Need are Determined

#### Step 1: Determine if you meet the financial need eligibility requirements

Eligibility for financial need is determined by enrollment in at least one financial assistance program (please see application for examples of programs). Well owners must provide documentation of their enrollment in a financial assistance program.

#### *Who can apply for financial assistance?*

- Landowner
- Spouse of landowner
- Heir of landowner, or legal representative of landowner
- Renter of land
- Shared well owner of a private residential water supply

#### Step 2: Determine if your well meets the contamination criteria

To determine if your well is contaminated, have samples of your well water tested by a [certified laboratory](#). To be eligible for financial assistance, the private water supply must be at or above the state and federal drinking water standards of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of nitrate-nitrogen. Nitrate-nitrogen is a time sensitive test. The [Southeastern Minnesota Water Analysis Laboratory](#) operates in Rochester MN and serves the southeast region of MN and can analyze the results within the time specified.

The water quality test will be considered valid if the analysis was performed by a certified laboratory within the last 3 years.

## What Can Be Funded and How Much Money Is Available?

The Safe Drinking Water for Private Well Users Assistance Program provides funding to pay for the following eligible activities to remediate a drinking water contamination issue:

- A. Well Repair or reconstruction – each eligible well owner is allowed 50% cost-share up to \$5,000 for well repair or reconstruction, including the cost of new pump or associated piping for a replaced well.
- B. Well Water Treatment Equipment and Installation – each eligible well owner is allowed 50% cost-share up to \$2,000 for certified point-of-use water treatment system
- C. Construction of a new well – each eligible well owner is allowed 50% cost-share up to \$8,500.

Well owners' meeting the financial hardship criteria are prioritized for well remediation to address their drinking water contamination issue and may be eligible for increased funding. Well owners who demonstrate they meet the requirements will be eligible for 90% cost-share for the following activities:

- A. Well Repair or reconstruction – each eligible well owner is allowed 90% cost-share up to \$5,000 for well repair or reconstruction, including the cost of new pump or associated piping for a replaced well.
- B. Well Water Treatment Equipment and Installation – each eligible well owner is allowed 90% cost-share up to \$2,000 for certified point-of-use water treatment system
- C. Construction of a new well – each eligible well owner is allowed 50% cost-share up to \$8,500.

For example, the maximum possible award for financial assistance is \$4,500 for well repair or reconstruction. If the total cost of reconstructing your well is \$5,000, your grant amount would be \$4,500 and you would be responsible for covering the remaining \$500. If the cost of installing a treatment system is \$2,000, your grant amount would be \$1,800 and you would be responsible for covering the remaining \$200.

### *What Costs Am I Responsible For?*

You will enter into an agreement with a well driller or licensed pump installer for their services. You are responsible for 100% of those costs. Financial assistance through this program will not cover 100% of those costs. To ensure that the contractor is paid, it is our practice to mail your grant payment check to the well driller or licensed pump installer directly.

### *What Items are Grant Eligible?*

The following items are eligible for reimbursement under the private well assistance program:

#### Eligible Items

- Water tests that determine if the well is contaminated for nitrate-nitrogen (must be completed at a certified laboratory and certified test report must be provided upon request)
- Reconstruction of a contaminated well
- Construction of a new well, including the cost of purchasing and installing a pump if necessary
- Installation of a new pump, including the associated piping for a replaced well
- Equipment and installation to treat and remove contaminants from the water

#### Grant Ineligible Items

- Costs for any work done before a contract is filed and award is approved by the local soil and water conservation district
- Private wells that do not meet the established contamination criteria
- Wells that are not used for a drinking water source
- Dug wells or wells not meeting the requirements of State of MN Well Construction Code (Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725; see "Laws and Regulations" section below)

### How to Apply

If you meet the criteria to apply for financial assistance through this program, the next step is to apply. Please note, do not begin any work until you receive notice from the local contact that your project has been approved and funding is available. **Work completed before receiving the approval letter will not be reimbursed.**

**Step 1** – Determine whether well reconstruction or well treatment is needed to address your water quality concerns. Please consult a [licensed well driller](#) or pump installer and provide an estimate of cost. Outline the proposed method to address the issue under "Well Project Information" on the application.

**Step 2** –To apply, please download and fill out the application on our website. If you experience issues downloading the form, please contact your local grant representative, Sheila Harmes, Winona County Water Planner, [sharmes@co.winona.mn.us](mailto:sharmes@co.winona.mn.us) or (507) 457-6522.

Step 3 – Provide the necessary documentation. You must provide 1) a certified water test report from an accredited laboratory and 2) project cost estimate from a licensed professional and 3) (if applicable) Documentation of enrollment in a financial assistance program as outlined on the application.

Step 4 – Mail or email the completed application to: Sheila Harmes, Winona County Water Planner [sharmes@co.winona.mn.us](mailto:sharmes@co.winona.mn.us) or (507) 457-6522.

### Grant Award Approval & Follow-Up

Once you have been awarded financial assistance from the local soil and water conservation district or County office, you may begin work on your private water supply and request the reimbursement. All work must be completed within one year from the date of the board approved contract unless otherwise specified in the contract. Payment must also be requested and approved prior to the end of the contract.

Step 1: The award notice will be sent by mail or e-mail, depending on your preference. The local office may also contact you via phone or email to set-up a time to discuss the contract details.

Step 2: Landowner or renter will contract with a licensed well driller or licensed pump installer to complete the work specified in the grant agreement. Cost-share funds will only be provided to applicants that use a licensed well driller, plumber, or pump installer for water treatment installation or well repair/reconstruction. The applicant may need to request a copy of the state-issued license for the contractor in order for work to be certified.

- A. If an applicant is requesting funds for new well installation, any existing well used for drinking water on the property must be sealed by a MN Department of Health (MDH) licensed well contractor and once well is fully sealed, contractor will submit a Well and Boring Sealing Record to the MDH. This information must be available by the sub-recipient, as requested. The well owner must comply with all requirements in MN Rules chapter 4725; and a well must be constructed or reconstructed by a well contractor licensed under this chapter.
- B. If an applicant is requesting funds for installation of a water treatment device, the water treatment device must be installed in accordance with State of Minnesota Plumbing Code (MN Rules, chapter 4714), by a water contractor licensed under chapter 326B or a plumber licensed under chapter 326B. It must comply with MN Rules, on “Water Conditioning Equipment” (part 4714.0611); appropriate technology to address the contaminant must be used, and be labeled under MN Rules, part 4714.0611, UPS section 611.1.3 as an appropriate technology to address the contaminant identified in the testing.

Step 3: Before final payment is approved by the local board, the applicant must submit all required forms to the local office:

- A. the work must be certified by a licensed well driller, plumber, or pump installer.
- B. The landowner must submit all invoices. Invoices must be dated & itemized according to the equipment components and when work was performed. (i.e. treatment system installation, dates/hours worked, and equipment utilized.)
- C. The landowner must sign a cost share voucher (note: Private work is NOT an eligible component of the cost share)
- D. Well owner signature and date to certify completion

Step 4: After all approvals are obtained, the grant award check will be mailed to the licensed contractor directly.

Step 5: Monitor and maintain your system! Water system components should be properly maintained and routinely inspected by a licensed professional.

- A. If you installed a point of use water treatment system, follow the specifications for the unit to properly replace any filters or contract with a licensed professional to perform routine maintenance.
- B. Collect a water sample from your well annually and have it tested for total coliform bacteria and nitrate-nitrogen.
- C. Maintain your well by ensuring it has a waterproof cap and that the well casing extends at least 1 foot above the surface of the ground.
- D. Properly maintain septic systems and keep chemicals and other fertilizers away from your well.
- E. Consult the ["Well Owner's Handbook"](#) for properly maintaining your well.

### Who Do I Contact for Questions?

Please contact your local county representative with any questions regarding eligibility or the application:

Sheila Harmes, Water Planner

Winona County Planning & Environmental Services

[sharmes@co.winona.mn.us](mailto:sharmes@co.winona.mn.us)

(507) 457-6522