

**Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda**

**Monday, July 21, 2025**

**9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**IN PERSON at MPCA offices in St. Paul with Webex Available (Hybrid Meeting)**

**9:00 Regular Clean Water Council Business**

- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Introductions—please declare any perceived or actual conflict of interest
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Agenda - comments/additions and approve agenda
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Meeting Minutes - comments/additions and approve meeting minutes
- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Chair, Committee, and Council Staff update

**9:30 Public Comment**

Any member of the public wishing to address the Council regarding something not on the agenda is invited to do so as a part of this agenda item.

**9:45 (INFORMATION ITEM) Researching PFAS Contamination Risks to Private Well Users from the Land Application of Biosolids**

With support from the MCEA, the University of Minnesota will provide an overview of a research proposal focused on private well contamination from PFAS from biosolids land application. This may be included as a proposal for the next biennium.

**10:45 Break**

**11:00 (DISCUSSION ITEM) We Are Water program overview, retrospective evaluation**

We Are Water is an innovative program that invites Minnesotans to both engage more deeply with water stewardship and strengthen their community connections. Program coordinators from MPCA and the Minnesota Humanities Center will share highlights, insights, and lessons learned after nearly a decade of the exhibit being hosted in 40 communities across Minnesota.

**12:00 Lunch**

**12:30 (DISCUSSION ITEM) UPDATE: Protecting Private Well Users in Southeast Minnesota**

Leaders from the Council asked MDH to provide an update on Phase II of the response to the nitrate petition for eight counties in southeast Minnesota. This phase focuses on the public health response to ensure safe drinking in the near-term. Activities include outreach and education, well inventories, free well water testing for five contaminants, mitigation for nitrate, and access to data on water quality and agency activities.

**1:00 (ACTION ITEM) Scoring Rubric**

Over the past several months, the Budget and Outcomes Committee has developed a draft scoring rubric to formalize how proposals are evaluated and to clearly reflect Council priorities. This tool will strengthen Council and public engagement, while providing clear guidance to and increased feedback for applicants. We'll review the draft rubric, user guide, and proposed process at this meeting and seek preliminary endorsement of the rubric for "beta testing" this summer.

**2:00 Adjourn**

***Steering Committee meets directly after adjournment***

**Clean Water Council**  
June 16, 2025, Meeting Summary

**Members present:** John Barten (Chair), Steve Besser, Rich Biske (Vice Chair), Dick Brainerd, Gail Cederberg, Steve Christenson, Tannie Eshenaur, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Holly Hatlewick, Peter Kjeseth, Annie Knight, Chris Meyer, Fran Miron, Jason Moeckel, Ole Olmanson, Jeff Peterson, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, Marcie Weinandt, and Jessica Wilson.

**Members absent:** Senator John Hoffman, Rep. Kristi Pursell, and Sen. Nathan Wessenberg.

*To watch the Webex video recording of this meeting, please go to <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/clean-water-council/meetings>, or contact [Brianna Frisch](#).*

**Clean Water Council Business**

- A moment of silence for the assassination of Melissa and Mark Hortman, attacks on John and Yvette Hoffman, and attempted or intended attacks on other legislators. Time was taken to share memories and connections with the Hortmans. Links for the families GoFundMe will be sent out in an email to Council members, if they would like to contribute.
- Introductions
- Motion to approve the June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Brad Gausman. Motion carries unanimously. Amend Representative Kristi Pursell because they are in listed as attending and absent.
- Motion to approve the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting summary by Steve Besser, seconded by Dick Brainerd. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair, Committee, and Council Staff update:
  - Chair update: Peter Schwagerl, Brad Gausman, John Barten, and Jen Kader attended the Forever Green Forum. The primary state funding source for Forever Green Initiative are the Clean Water Funds (CWFs). It was interesting looking at the cover crops and the work they are doing now. There was also a farmer panel, and it was great to listen to those discussions.
  - Policy Committee update: At the last meeting the reviewed the latest draft of the Engagement Plan. Thank you to Jessica Wilson and Marcie Weinandt. The Council will see next, for review and approval. They also reviewed a draft policy on large volume water users. They talked about providing more context. They also revisited their policy priorities, so they can focus on them in this upcoming year.
  - Budget and Outcomes Committee update: They canceled their last meeting, so no update. They continue to work on a scoring rubric. The next meeting will be July 11, the second Friday due to the holiday.
  - Staff update: Jen Kader was able to participate in the Watershed Partners boat tour and will be at the Minnesota Watersheds field tour in Roseau. Jen is available to attend events and provide presentations on the Council, to help engage with the public more. Jen also plans to setup one-on-ones with each Council members to connect and converse.

**Engagement Plan (Webex 00:57:00)**

- The Engagement Ad Hoc Subcommittee has finalized the draft Engagement Plan following input from the March Full Council Meeting and subsequent discussion with the Policy Committee. It is being presented here with changes, and a vote to adopt this plan is requested.
- Background: After finishing up the last round of recommendations, they wanted to glean more public input during that process. The plan is intended to guide the Clean Water Council in seeking input on its budget and policy recommendations and strategic plan. It is based on the International Association of Public Participation Plan (IAP2) framework. The Council saw the draft plan at the March meeting and provided a lot of good feedback at that time. This has been revised, presented it to the Policy Committee, and it was approved and moved to be brought forward to the full Council for review and approval.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Besser: What would be the pros and cons of having a public comment button on our website?
  - *Response from Glenn Skuta, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA):* There are pros and cons to everything. Having it be an open button and always there, you may be inviting comments on issues people have that the Council does not have a lot of input in or control over, and it would be better to direct them to the state agencies. It is thinking about complaints, and Jen is already getting emails as a matter of course. In a way, it could become a thing that becomes another step in the process. I think when you are actively soliciting input on something, you could have a temporary button for a specific item, and it could be more productive.
  - *Gail Cederberg:* I agree with specific and focused input. Given what people see on social media and the trolling that goes on, we don't need to engage in that. Trying to get people to sign up for the newsletter as we go out and talk is number one. We want to get them on the list. As we launch feedback, it would go out to all those people.
- Dick Brainerd: If there is a special session in the fall being considered by the Legislature, how does something like that fit into this plan? *Response:* The newsletter would capture that. Also, as members talk with their constituents, it can come up. It is no secret there would be cuts, so that communication would be important. It is something to start thinking about too. It is meant to be a tool. These are general items, we as a Council, should be thinking about throughout the timeline.
- Rep. Steve Jacob: I see you are looking for feedback and input at different meetings. As someone who is attending these Council meetings, I notice your public comment is at the end. What I learned as a county commissioner, is have some public comment at the beginning of a meeting. If public comment is at the end of a meeting, members are taking votes and information and acting on it in these meetings, and then the public does not care anymore, because decisions are already made before the public can provide input. So, they are out of the decisions.
  - Marcie Weinandt: In the past the Council would get the recommendations together, and then provide it to the public, to gather public comments. This reflects the desire of the Council, to get the input prior to the budget recommendations. It is exactly what we experienced, where we heard feedback from members of the public who did not feel like they had a way into the process.
  - John Barten: For many years, the Council did not have a public comment period. It is a good point to request input earlier than at the end. It is good to have the Engagement Plan.
- Brad Gausman: On page five, the highlighted actions on the graphic, what does that mean? *Answer:* It was providing emphasis for the role and relationship between the Council and the other bodies.
- Gail Cederberg: I really like how this is setup, with the different process steps, so we know the actions we should be taking as we go along. I think a lot of the parts in this, highlight the different groups involved, and it helps to educate us as members, and new people joining, as well as our constituents.
- Dick Brainerd: Where do we go from here? *Answer:* This is something we've designed to review every January and reflect on any feedback that we receive on it and revise it then. We submitted an abstract to be able to get it into the Water Resources Conference but was not accepted. This is an inaugural plan; we can accept feedback as we go. This was a starting point, so we have something to move forward with. We hope the Council considered approving it today. Then, we can start to use it. Perfect is the enemy of good, and we have this as a start.
- Steve Christenson: Motion that the Council adopt this Engagement Plan, seconded by Marcie Weinandt. *Further discussion:*
  - Steve Christenson: This would be good for new members.
  - Rich Biske: I would like to see this show up on the Council's agenda, maybe on a quarterly basis, so we are reminding ourselves of the importance of it and keeping ourselves accountable to that engagement. We can keep track of it too, hopefully challenging ourselves to do more over time.
  - Glen Skuta, MPCA: I think this is so well done. In nine pages it brings a lot of things together. I can see it being useful for new members, and anyone who is not familiar with the Council's work. Great job.
  - *Motion carries unanimously.*

#### **Clean Water Fund Outcomes (Webex 01:33:00)**

- Council Members will be asked to review the summaries of the meeting exercises from May for accuracy and, as necessary, add new ideas or further clarity to the content.

- Additional input will be requested for others outside of the Council, to help form this high-level strategic view of outcomes. So, there will be opportunities to comment there as well.
- Question set 1: *“If someone were to ask you why the Clean Water Fund was valuable, what would you say? What would you point to or describe?”* These were the themes:
  - We have science-based and data-informed strategies and programs because of our monitoring and assessment work.
  - We’ve done comprehensive planning on the watershed scale.
  - We are seeing improved outcomes from lakes, streams, and groundwater.
  - We’ve invested in agricultural systems change.
  - We’re increasing awareness.
  - We’ve built a solid foundation for current and future work
  - We’ve been reliably there.
  - We can be nimble in responsive, while supporting accelerated implementation.
  - We’re creating ripple effects.
  - We’ve enhanced coordination and collaboration among state agencies and other interested parties.
  - We’re being more strategic.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: It seems intentional that you are not naming any programs. What is the thinking on it? *Answer:* It is intentional, and there were a lot of programs mentioned. If you have specific programs being considered, please connect with Jen, and she can share it. There are so many programs, and others may feel left out, so intentionally leaving them out was the decision.
- Jen Kader: Looking at progress over time, the Council can reflect on a then (2008), to now (2025), to soon (2030), and later (2034). It is a way to be thinking about how these programs, not just relate to each other, but what the Council wants to focus on moving forward. There are all different pieces that touch each other. This can help tell the story of how things come together over time. It is a current conceptual framework, as we talk about outcomes, being able to have something to check in on, would be helpful.
- John Barten: Whether you are a lumper or a splitter, the first item is too lumped. It may need teasing out. It may be clearer to say, we’ve done comprehensive monitoring and assessment in Minnesota waters. From that, we’ve developed science-based and data-informed strategies and programs.
  - *Response:* I appreciate that. The reason they are connected, is because most people connected them in their comments.
  - *Comment from Tannie Eshenaus, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH):* We also use that as a baseline, so we can tell if we are doing better or worse.
- Tannie Eshenaus, MDH: For the third theme listed (We are seeing improved outcomes from lakes, streams, and groundwater), do we want to include “measurable outcomes”? *Answer:* Yes, we can.
- Steve Christenson: I thought this was great.
- Jessica Wilson: For the “We’re increasing awareness” theme, you talk about people and mobilizing them to action, and that should be included in the theme text more. It can be “We’re increasing awareness and mobilizing action”, you say it in the text, but exclude it in the theme. That may be the one theme about people in the text.
  - *Comment from Tannie Eshenaus, MDH:* This aligns closely with the goal number four: “Minnesotans value water and take action to protect it.” It seems strong to me.
  - *Comment from Justin Hanson, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR):* You could include something about the prioritization at the local level as well. That engagement with stakeholders, using the science, and they are empowered to help decide what those local priorities are.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: For “We’ve built a solid foundation for current and future work”, it feels so big. Parts are found in other themes (i.e., collaboration and science-based data), and it feels like it may be a duplication here. It may be useful as introductory text or reduce some of the duplication.
  - Gail Cederberg: This is the only spot with policy mentioned. That is something we have done well, are policies. It can be one of the solid foundations that we’ve implemented. It is something we should be proud of. It is a big thing, as a foundation.
  - Jessica Wilson: Maybe the last theme (We’re being more strategic) is a key place to appropriate.

- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: For “We’ve been reliably there”, perhaps it is implicit, but when I read this, I think about watershed-based implementation funding (WBIF) and predictable. The funds are not compatible. Perhaps, the word “efficient” could be added. We should take competition out of the mix.
  - *Response from Jen Kader:* This line also brought in the response to federal funding disappearing, or the lack of assurance around bonding and general fund allowance. The CWFs have been present. We can reflect all of this.
  - *Holly Hatlewick:* I like the word predictability, but I think perhaps the word “reliable” source is too consistent of a word, because it isn’t a guarantee, and reliable may be implies that it is here to stay. I don’t have a better word for you. While it is less competitive and has been reliable to this point, even this next biennium cycle, that reliability has gone down a little. Perhaps, just “source of funding” is all that needs to be in this theme.
  - *Justin Hanson, BWSR:* Some recognition that this is unprecedented. There is nowhere else in the country where this is happening. We are building the spaceship while flying it. It is an important commitment to future water resources. Other states at this time are stalling out on water resource projects, but not Minnesota. Somewhere in this document it should be included.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: The “We’re creating ripple effects”, feels like a catchall area. These are not the outcomes themselves, but the mechanisms. I would also like to throw “innovation” somewhere, because it is not exactly captured here.
  - *Comment from Tannie Eshenaur, MDH:* It is important for people to know the CWFs and the Council, benefit more than just the immediate CWFs funded projects. I have experienced that so much in my work, mostly in collaboration with the other agencies. It can be mentioned more. Water is complex and we need a deep bench, and we know who to connect with.
  - *Gail Cederberg:* It is not just collaboration; it is the communication between all the state agencies. That is clear. Transparency as well.
  - *Jeff Peterson, UMN:* One of the things that makes the CWFs stand out at the UMN, is there is relatively stable funding, as we have talked about, along with the collaboration. Those two things have allowed us to go after other funding sources and build onto the funds. It has happened for the stormwater program and Forever Green Initiative.
- Jason Moeckel, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR): In reflection of all of these themes, we need to think about who we are talking to and how this relates to them. Often, with one person, we think about what they might be interested in hearing; how it is connected to them. I think we have to dial it back and say who are the someone’s we are imagining, and what should that say? Most people will tune you out after a few minutes. We need the elevator speech. We need to know the audience. Maybe we need a set of options for language we all feel comfortable with, but for individuals, so we can dial it in a few different ways.
  - *Response from Jen Kader:* I think the Engagement Plan can be tied into this, and the conversations you are having with constituents, so you can share that with them.
  - *Marcie Weinandt:* It holds us responsible for knowing about the programs that are supported by the CWFs. We should be able to talk to people about them when it comes up, whether it is on a walking trail or at work, etc.
- Jessica Wilson: The theme “We’re being more strategic” might be a spot to include some of the policy work. Are there examples of where we have been able to head off, or trim off, and impact because we are being strategic? *Answer from John Barten:* I think the answer would be yes. I’d have to think more about it. In the past ten to fifteen years, looking at the policy pieces have reduced impacts. For example, the lead pipes policy. The MDH also does the source water protection plans, which are not in rule or statute. The Council wanted the MDH to do them, so they have those plans. It affects a huge percentage of our population.

#### **Increasing Input for the Clean Water Fund Outcomes Discussions (Webex 02:18:00)**

- Given where we are in the strategy year and the activities outlined in the Engagement Plan, this agenda item merges the two previous ones together. Council Members will be asked to consider how to solicit external input from interested parties over the coming months.

- Council members should identify groups, or events, they could talk to on these topics. Jen Kader, along with Steve Besser, Rich Biske, and John Barten, will work on a draft follow up survey. The survey would be sent out to constituents (via newsletter and on available on the webpage).

### **Implementing the PFAS Blueprint (Webex 02:22:00)**

- Following up on interest from Council Members from the May meeting, MPCA staff will provide a high-level overview of the current status of implementation of the PFAS Blueprint.
- Minnesota's per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) journey:
  - PFOA and PFOS reported at disposal site in early 2000s. They were discovered in nearby drinking water. Upon further investigation, found PFAS throughout Minnesota. Thousands of PFAS studies were published, and health-based guidance evolves to reflect new science. Legacy and emerging PFAS are found at concentrations of concern in multiple places around Minnesota.
- Health effects and exposure: immune suppression, developmental effects, and reproductive effects. The exposure routes include drinking water, fish consumption, other food consumption, breastmilk or formula, air, possibly dermal. The main exposure route varies depending on the PFAS compound.
- The Minnesota's PFAS Blueprint supports a holistic and systematic approach to address PFAS: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/minnesotas-pfas-blueprint>
- The PFAS Blueprint is broken up into these ten topics: Preventing PFAS pollution, measuring PFAS effectively and consistently, quantifying PFAS risks to human health, limiting PFAS exposure from drinking water, ensuring safe consumption of fish and game, limiting PFAS exposure from food, understanding risks from PFAS air emissions, protecting ecosystem health, remediating PFAS-contaminated sites, and managing PFAS in waste.
  - The agencies have been working together for sampling and analysis, and have put out two documents, a sampling document and an analysis document, that are intended to be guidance for lab work in Minnesota.
  - The MDH is also working on health risk limits, connecting with other state agencies and research results for Minnesotans. The evolution of the health-based values (some are health risk units as well), are that the numbers are getting smaller as we learn more.
  - As of January 1, 2024, there is a prohibition of PFAS intentionally added to food packaging in Minnesota. The MPCA is moving forward with enforcement, making sure food grade retailers are compliant.
  - Measuring things in air is very different than measuring things in water. For PFAS in the air, they are learning more all the time. It is something they are working on building a better understanding moving forward.
  - Remediation of PFAS has been happening in Minnesota for a while. They have been dealing with PFAS in the east metro area, among other areas.
- The PFAS Blueprint reveals the response is to prevent PFAS pollution whenever possible. To manage PFAS pollution when prevention is not feasible, or pollution has already occurred. To clean up PFAS pollution at contamination sites.
  - PFAS Remediation Guidance: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/pfas-remidiation-guidance>
  - This includes directions for investigation and remediation of PFAS. Provides stakeholder engagement and incorporation of emerging data. It also provides alignment of state and federal designations. So far, it has had good feedback.
- Public Water Systems:
  - To date, 99 percent of community water systems have been tested for PFAS. Of these, 18 had an exceedance of the EPA MCLs (purple dots). Most of the locations sampled are meeting the values. The MDH does have a good handle on community water systems. Who pays for it? There is a 3M Settlement (2018) which has been used for different things. Other ways include the Drinking Water (State) Revolving Fund, bonding, drinking water planning and design grant, as well as user fees.
- The MPCA has identified 379 facilities where monitoring will help us determine where and how PFAS are entering the environment. The MPCA PFAS monitoring includes solid waste facilities, industrial facilities, municipal wastewater treatment plants, and regional airport in Greater Minnesota.

- Monitoring Outcomes:
  - Key results: Certain industry sectors in Minnesota are of particular concern for PFAS release. PFAS were found at all airports, wastewater treatment plants, and currently or historically unlined landfills. Quality PFAS data collection is challenging in some media, like industrial wastewater.
  - Next steps: Source reduction and management plans. Target investigations at sites with drinking water risks. Evaluation of remaining data. As well as the development of permitting strategies across media.
  - Stormwater has a 2025 Multi-Sector General Permit for Industrial Stormwater issued on June 1. The permit requires PFAS monitoring for permitted facilities in certain industries. Affected facilities must complete and implement a PFAS monitoring plan. Facilities with PFAS results greater than permit thresholds will do source and exposure reduction plans. Facilities will also need to know their proximity to drinking water supply management areas (DWSMAs) and Class 1 waters. The Municipal Stormwater (MS4) is a work in progress.
  - Municipal and Industrial:
    - Emphasis on source identification and reduction.
    - Class 1 PFAS water quality standards
    - Broader implementation strategy
  - Municipal only: biosolids strategy
    - Facilities that land apply biosolids must collection and analyze at least one biosolids sample prior to land application.
    - Four response tiers based on results of sample analysis.
  - Solid waste:
    - Include PFAS as part of routine groundwater monitoring at unlined landfills.
    - Leachate management:
  - Reduce leachate volume
    - Reduce leachate volume, pretreat prior to land application, and coordinate disposal options with wastewater facilities.
  - Air: Of the 158 facilities that reported in 2023, 11 reported having PFAS. There is rulemaking underway; currently includes nearly 400 PFAS compounds.
- The economic case for prevention:
  - The cost to buy PFAS to make consumer products is \$50 to \$1,000 per pound. The cost to remove and destroy PFAS from municipal wastewater is \$2.7 million to \$18 million per pound.
  - The MDA is working on implementing a prohibition on PFAS intentionally added to pesticides and some other agricultural products on the same timeline as Amara's Law.
  - Amara's Law: Rulemaking Updates
    - For reporting and fees: The manufacturers must submit certain required information to the MPCA if they sell, offer for sale, or distribute products with intentionally added PFAS in Minnesota. Fees may be established to cover the costs of implementing the reporting program. The current comment period closes June 23.
    - After 2032, no products may be sold or offered for sale unless determined by rule that the use of PFAS in the product(s) is unavoidable.
    - A few amendments to note: They added the definition of "internal components". They specified that "juvenile product" does not include certain motor vehicles, e-bikes, or replacement parts. Prohibitions beginning January 1, 2025, do (did) not apply to the sale, offer for sale, or distribution for sale of product that contains intentionally added PFAS, only in electronic components or internal components. Finally, firefighting foam: airport hangar extension for use of Class B foams, allows the MPCA to issue extensions as needed beyond statutory date.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Tannie Eshenaur, MDH: I really cringe when I hear the term "everywhere forever chemicals" because that takes the away people's hope, so the work we do, looking for in all these places, it is important to know where it is and at what concentration.

- Dick Brainerd: So, by 2032 we shouldn't have to worry about PFAS in our products, except those unavoidable? *Answer:* According to this rulemaking will be the vehicle for the MPCA to decide who is affected and can make the determinations. We do not have a lot of details yet in this area. We have to get through the reporting and fees rulemaking, and that will help direct it.
- John Barten: Do water filters eliminate PFAS? What happens to the filters afterwards? *Answer:* They may work to remove larger PFAS molecules. After use, the filters are not being treated as hazardous waste in Minnesota.
- Brad Gausman: Does the firefighting foam fit as a necessary for training? I am thinking about the armed forces trainings that happens up in the Duluth area. The Duluth area is near Lake Superior, Camp Ripley near the Mississippi River. There is a reason these are located near water, and I think about the impact that may have. *Answer:* I believe at the federal level that type specifically has been identified to be used in training. So, currently that is correct. They are working on replacements.

**Office of the Legislative Auditors (on the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program)**  
(Webex 03:10:30)

- The Office of the Legislative Auditors is a non-partisan office within the legislative branch of government. The Office reports to the Legislative Audit Commission, which is bipartisan and bicameral. This spring the Office of the Legislative Auditors selected the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (WQCP) for an evaluation. They are waiting for the final approval but moving forward currently. A topic selection is included in the handout. Through a survey, legislators were interested in seeing results for this program. They are doing their research now, moving forward creating a workplan and finding a scope of the program. They will be reaching out to members of the Council. They will determine where the most value lies in the research. They are narrowing in on tentative research questions. They are interested in hearing from people on what should be included in the evaluation of the program. Two ways to connect: email the auditors directly, and there will also be a public input survey released once the selection topics have been selected.

*Questions:*

- Gail Cederberg: Does every program get audited? How are they selected? *Answer:* We receive topics from anyone, anyone can submit. These are received at our office. They go to a master list, which the audit commission reviews. They select about fifteen from the list. At that point, the staff will put together the background papers. Using that information an evaluation of a subcommittee will decide on a subset, usually between eight and ten evaluations. These go onto a survey for legislators, so they can select what they are more interested in learning more about. Regarding the ones selected, it depends on where the interest is at the time. In 2017, they did the Clean Water Fund outcomes. At the end of the audit, they produce a report for the public. This is released to everyone at the same time. The information in their work papers would become public, because it is subjected to the government data practices act.
- Brad Gausman: On the program overview, the funding of the CWFs is an important part of the description of the program. Also, on the evaluation questions, could you find out if enrolled producers and landowners understand where the funding is coming from? I think it is integral to understanding the program and should be evaluated. Do they know the funding is coming through the Legacy Amendment? *Response:* So, asking if the folks enrolled in the program, know where the funding for it is coming from.
- Rich Biske: Is there a set of evaluation questions? *Answer:* It depends on the program. We often get asked to look at grants, so there are similar questions for those. However, it does depend on the program what evaluation questions are asked.
- *Council members can receive the auditor's emails, to follow up with them if desired.*

**Adjournment** (Webex 03:34:29)



# **PFAS, Biosolids, and Sensitive Sites Investigations**

**University of Minnesota**

**Matt Simcik, Professor**

**Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy**

**Carly Griffith – Water Program Director**

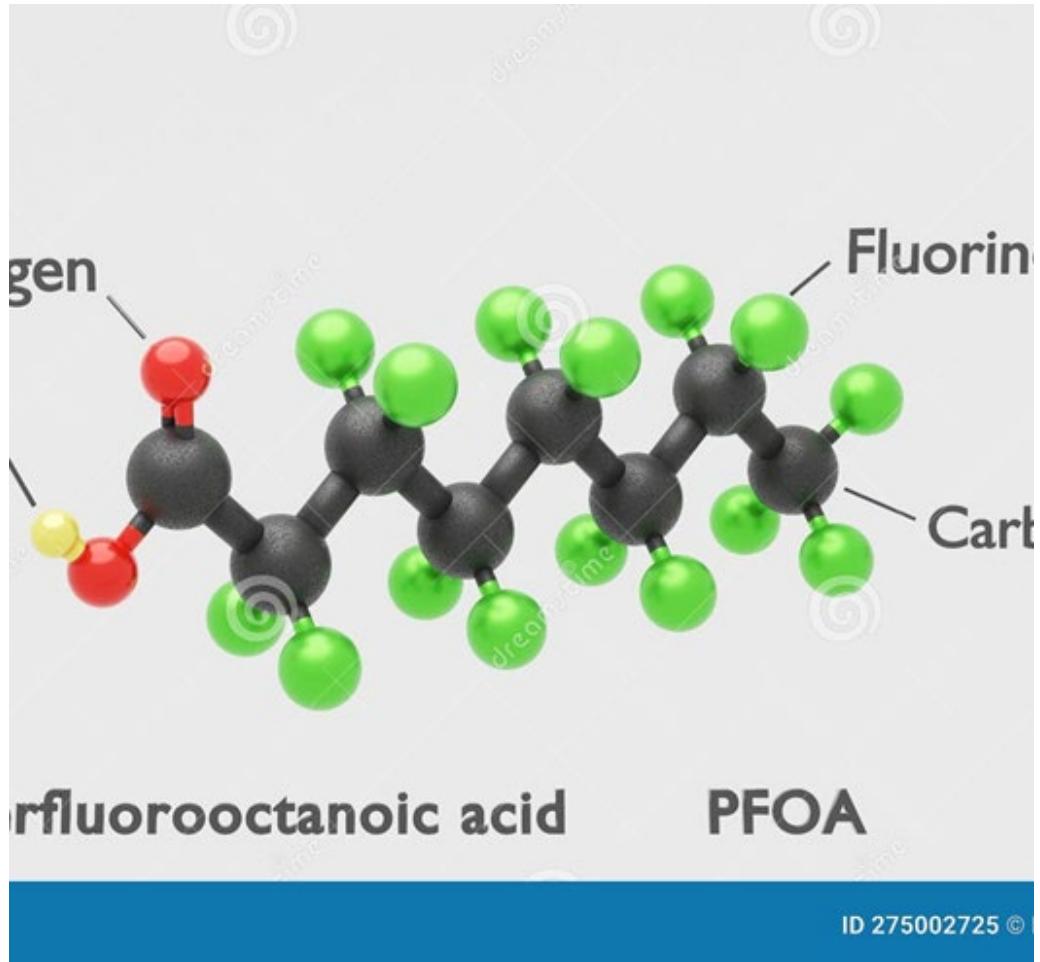
**Jay Eidsness – Staff Attorney**

**Ginny Yingling – MDH, retired**

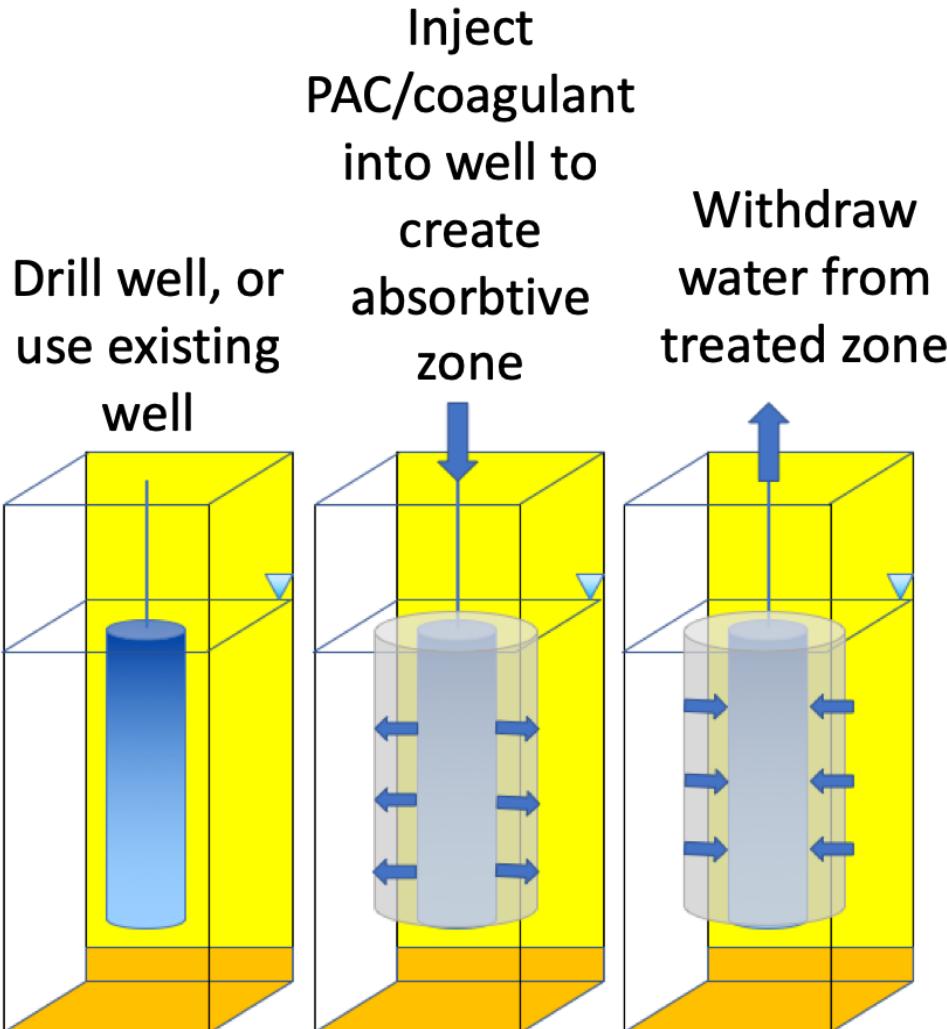
**July 21, 2025**

# PFAS Overview

- Broadly defined as any compound with at least “one fully fluorinated carbon atom”
- 3M first to mass produce PFAS in the 1950s
- PFAS become ubiquitous due to unique chemistry prized by industry
- Health risks start to become understood and PFAS regulation begins in the early 2000s.
- Today, PFAS regulations are some of the strictest, and multiple “legacy” PFAS are considered carcinogenic and linked to a variety of adverse health effects
- Minnesota and other jurisdictions regulate PFAS through an array of measures



# UMN's Involvement and Expertise



- **Environmental Occurrence**
- **Fate and Transport**
- **Toxicity**
- **Remediation**

# MCEA's Involvement and Expertise



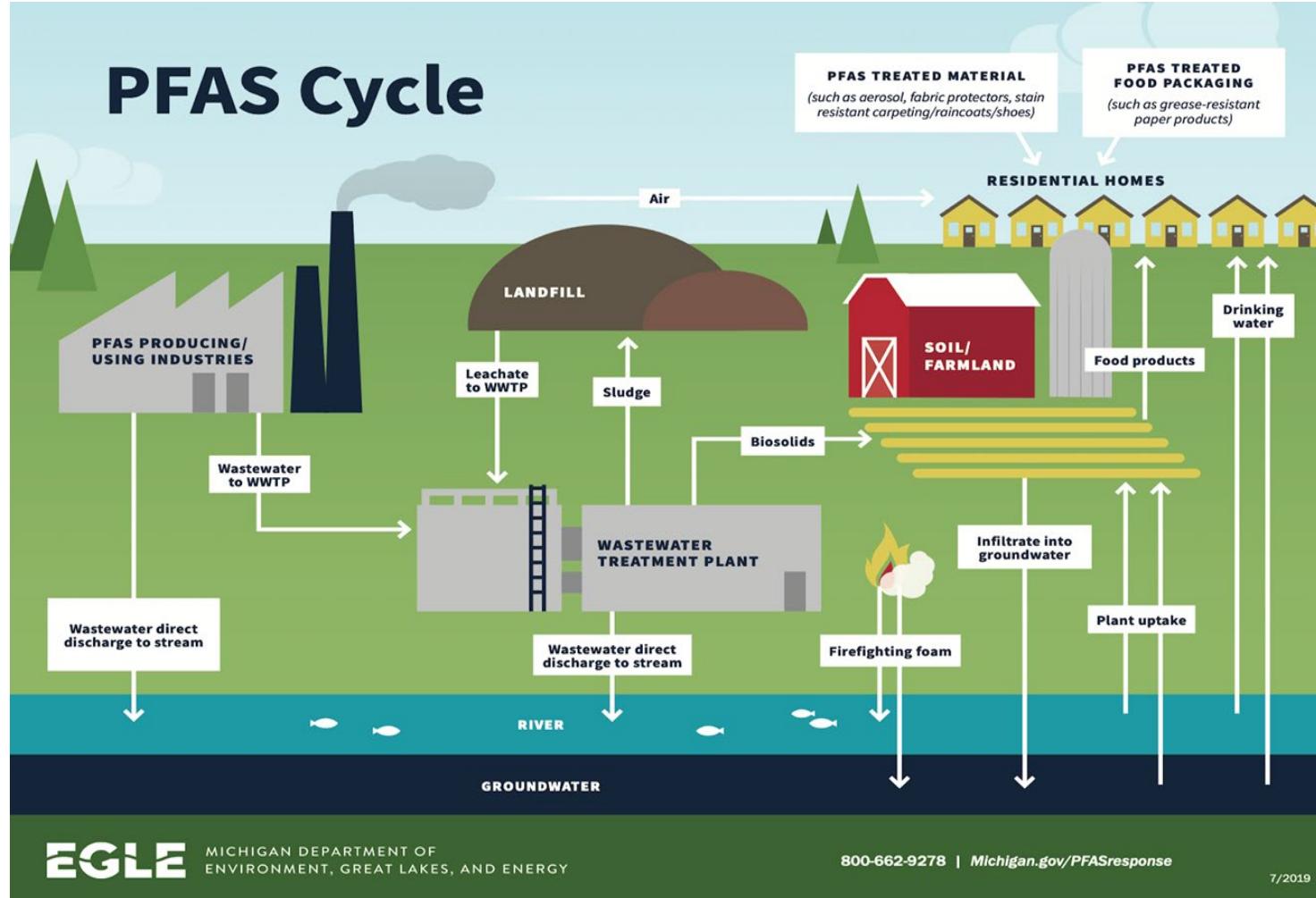
## Forever Chemicals in our Wastewater

How Minnesota can build on the PFAS source reduction laws passed in 2023

**Report Authors:** Carly Griffith, MCEA Water Program Director, Jay Eidsness, MCEA Staff Attorney, Heidi Guenther,

- **East Metro Settlement**
- **Legislative Successes**
- **Amara's Law Rulemaking**
- **3M Clean Water Act Permit**
- **Biosolids Strategy**
- **Biosolids Advocacy Report**

# The Wastewater Treatment Process and Residual Biosolids

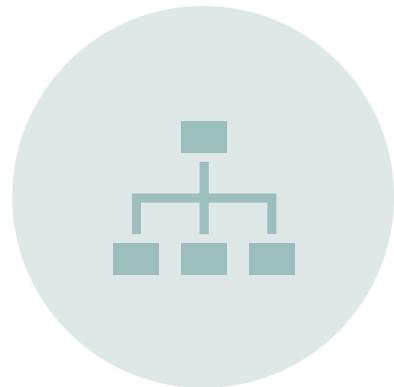


# What Minnesota is Doing on Biosolids



- **Biosolids are a nutrient-rich organic material that farmers can apply to their fields**
- **Nearly 20% of the state's biosolids are land-applied**
- **Legislature directed MPCA to develop strategy**

# MPCA Proposes and Finalizes Strategy



TIERED, RISK-MANAGEMENT  
APPROACH SIMILAR TO  
MICHIGAN



FOCUSES ON FORWARD LOOKING  
RISKS FROM LAND-APPLICATION

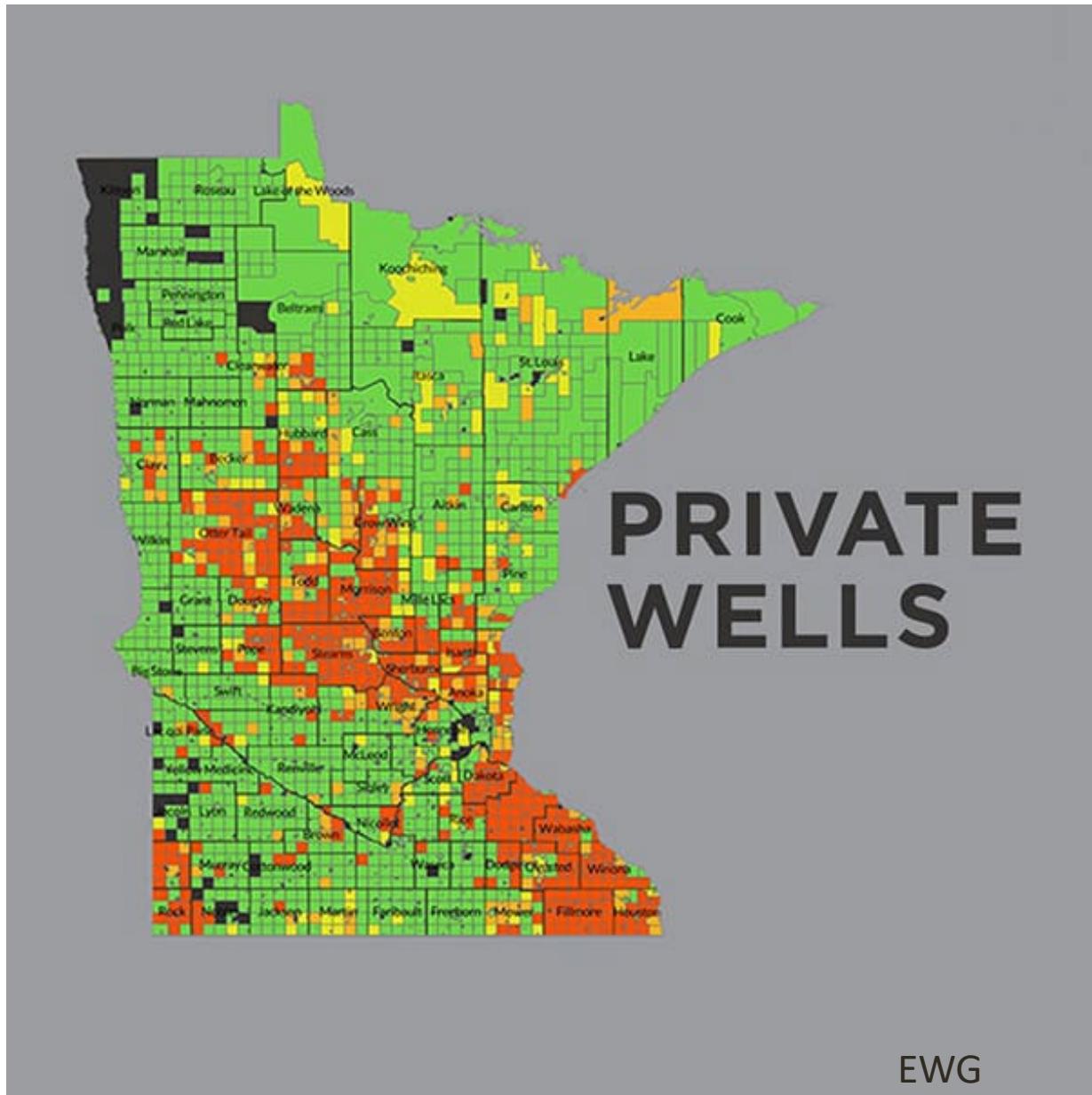


INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

# **Gaps in Minnesota's Regulation our Proposal Seeks to Close: Our Proposal at a High Level**

- The Strategy does not address legacy sources of PFAS contamination
- Joint proposal
  - University of Minnesota
  - MDH/MPCA
- Begin targeted investigations of high-risk sites for legacy PFAS contamination of drinking water sources from biosolids
- Sampling of private wells near biosolids application sites (Safe Drinking Water Act PFAS monitoring only includes community water supply wells).
- Investigation driven by risk factors:
  - Cumulative application load
  - Whether biosolids were likely to be industrially impacted due to source
  - Distance to drinking water sources
  - Sensitive hydrogeology

# Scope of the Challenge



# Draft Workplan

Over two Biennia (2028-2032)

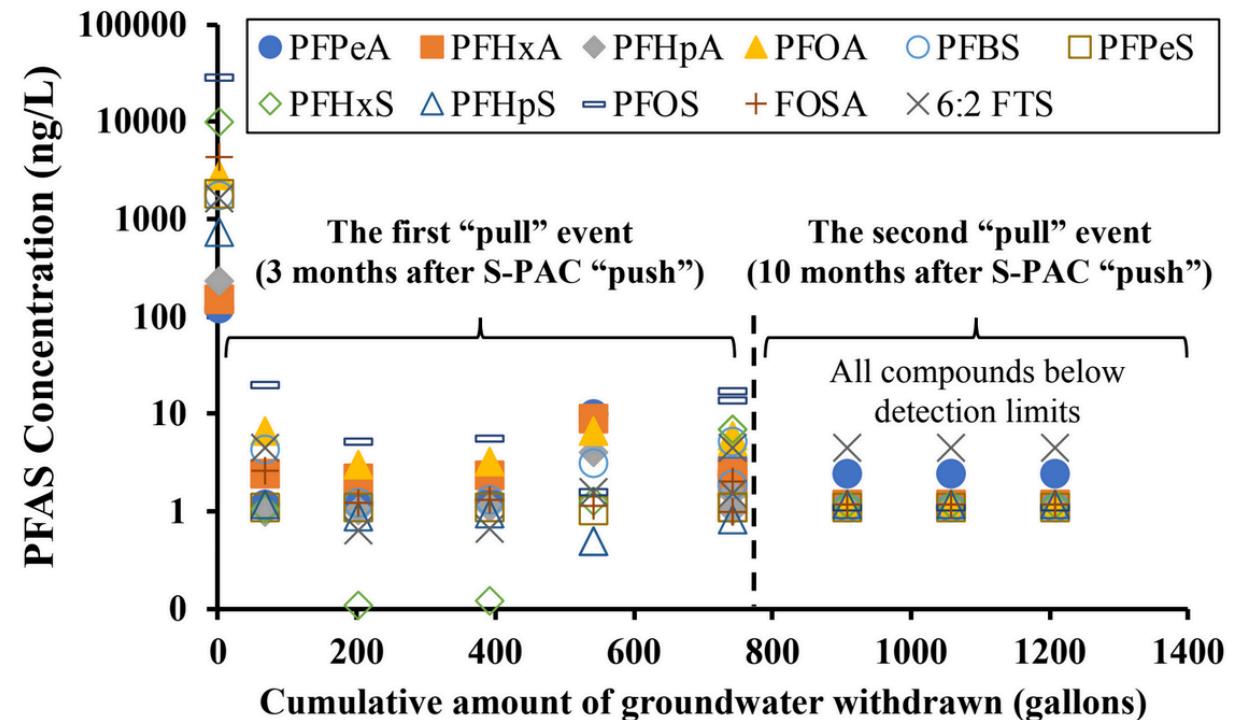
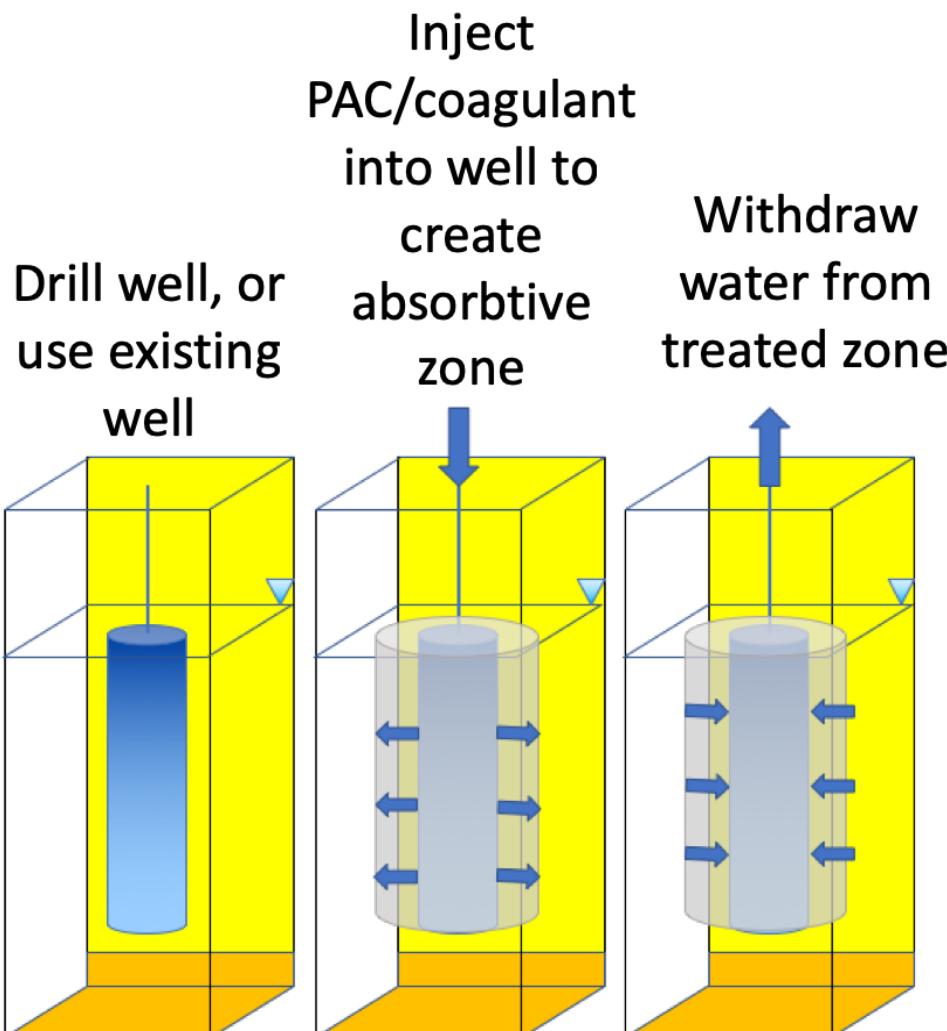
- 400 Well locations
  - Across state, but concentrated in areas where biosolids are known to have been applied
  - Both impacted and expectedly unimpacted sites
  - Well water and potentially soil (permission dependent)
- Suite of 25+ PFAS
  - PFOS, PFOA, Gen-X, short-chain
- Non-Target PFAS analysis
  - Identify, but can't quantify unknown fluorinated compounds
- Compare levels to EPA standards
- Compare levels among biosolids application intensity
- Compare water levels to soil levels

## Draft Budget

| Category                           | FY28      | FY29    | FY30    | FY31    |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Personnel                          | 152,756   | 157,337 | 162,060 | 166,922 |
| Equipment                          | 850,000   | 0       | 0       | 0       |
| Supplies,<br>Travel and<br>Tuition | 91,063    | 92,218  | 93,403  | 94,636  |
| Totals                             | 1,093,819 | 249,555 | 255,463 | 261,558 |

Total Cost for 4 years (400 wells): \$1,819,492

# Potential Solution



WE  
ARE  
WATER



Welcome!

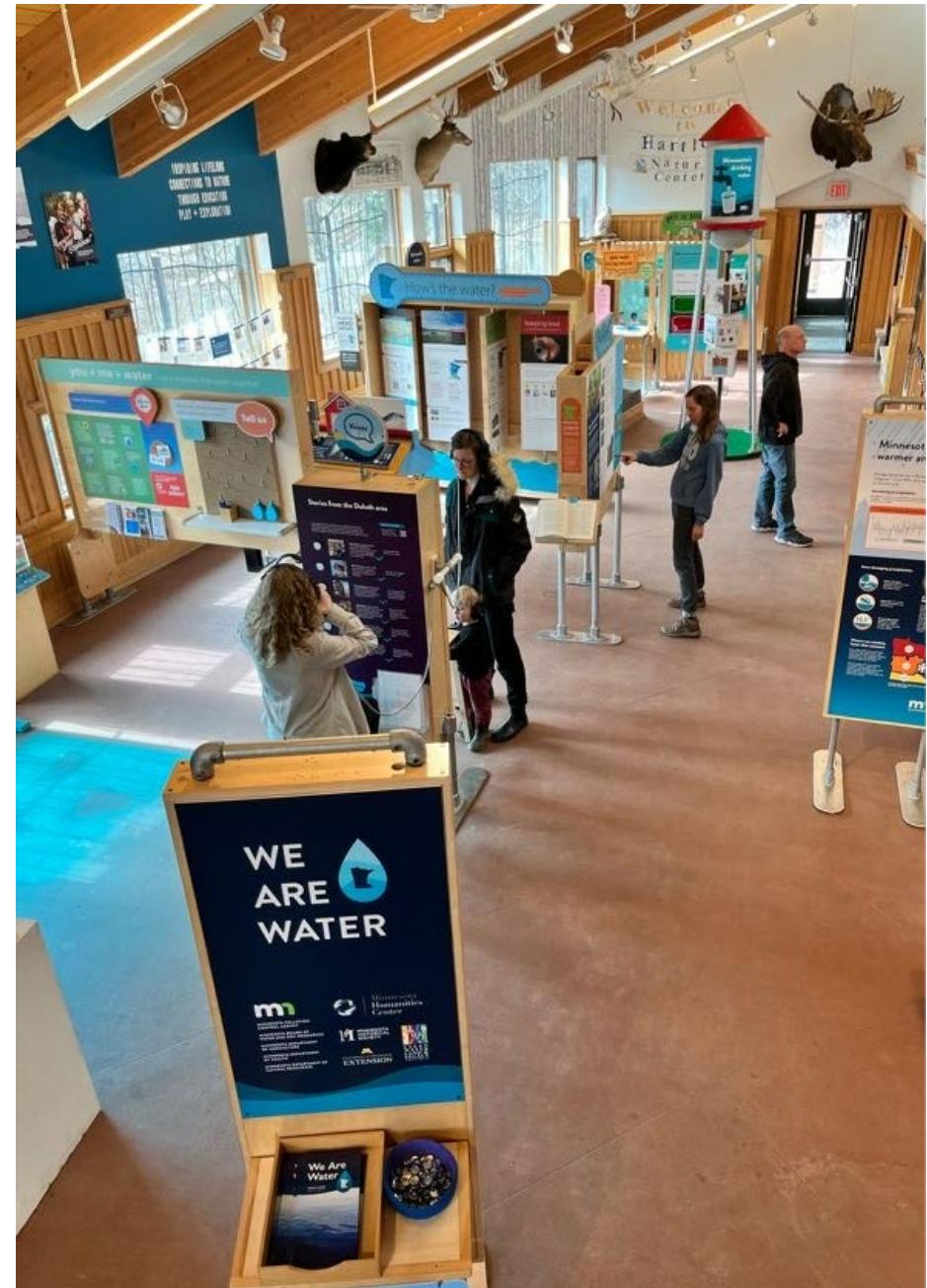
How does  
water show up  
in your life  
outside of  
work?

Type your answer  
in the chat

# A humanities- and equity-based approach to water engagement

Jana Larson |  
Program Coordinator

March 12, 2025



# Annie Humphry



What is the first question you would ask this person about their experience that you think might help you connect your priorities to what you heard in their story?



# What we do

- Traveling exhibit
- Partnership network
- Public events

To increase Minnesotans' responsibilities to and relationships with water.



# State partners

- Promote program
- Lead host site selection
- Oversee evaluation
- Connect networks to project
- Provide support for educational demonstrations



MINNESOTA  
POLLUTION  
CONTROL AGENCY

DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

BOARD OF WATER AND  
SOIL RESOURCES



Minnesota  
Humanities  
Center



**MINNESOTA**  
**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**  
**EXTENSION**

WE  
ARE  
WATER



Retrospective  
Evaluation  
2016 - 2023



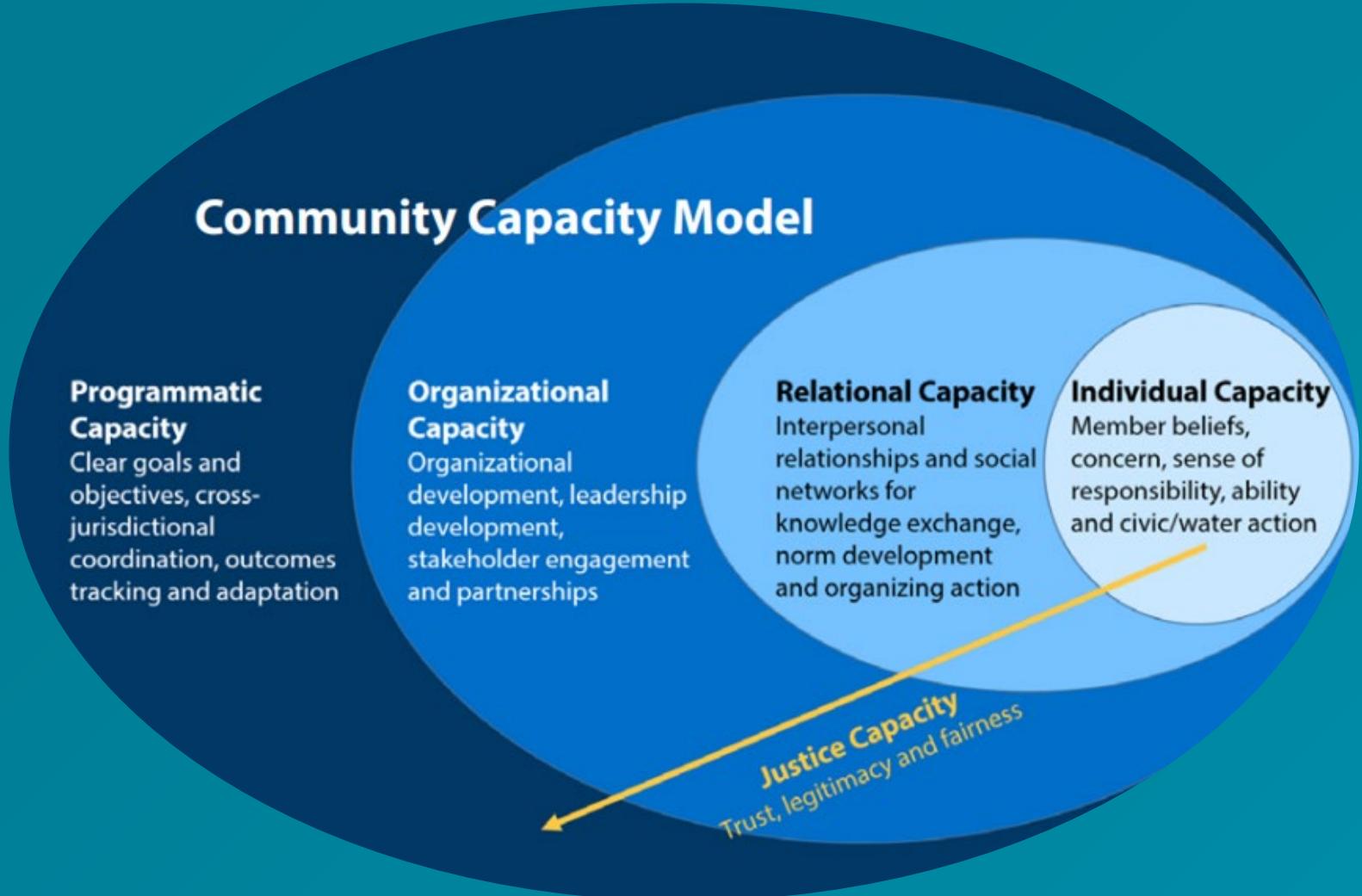
# Retrospective evaluation 2016 - 2023

- Five exhibit tours
- 30 sites
- ~90,000 visitors
- ~20,000 event participants
- 615 partnerships
  - 212 new
- 3,107 water stories

# Increasing engagement using absent narratives approach



# Program outcomes



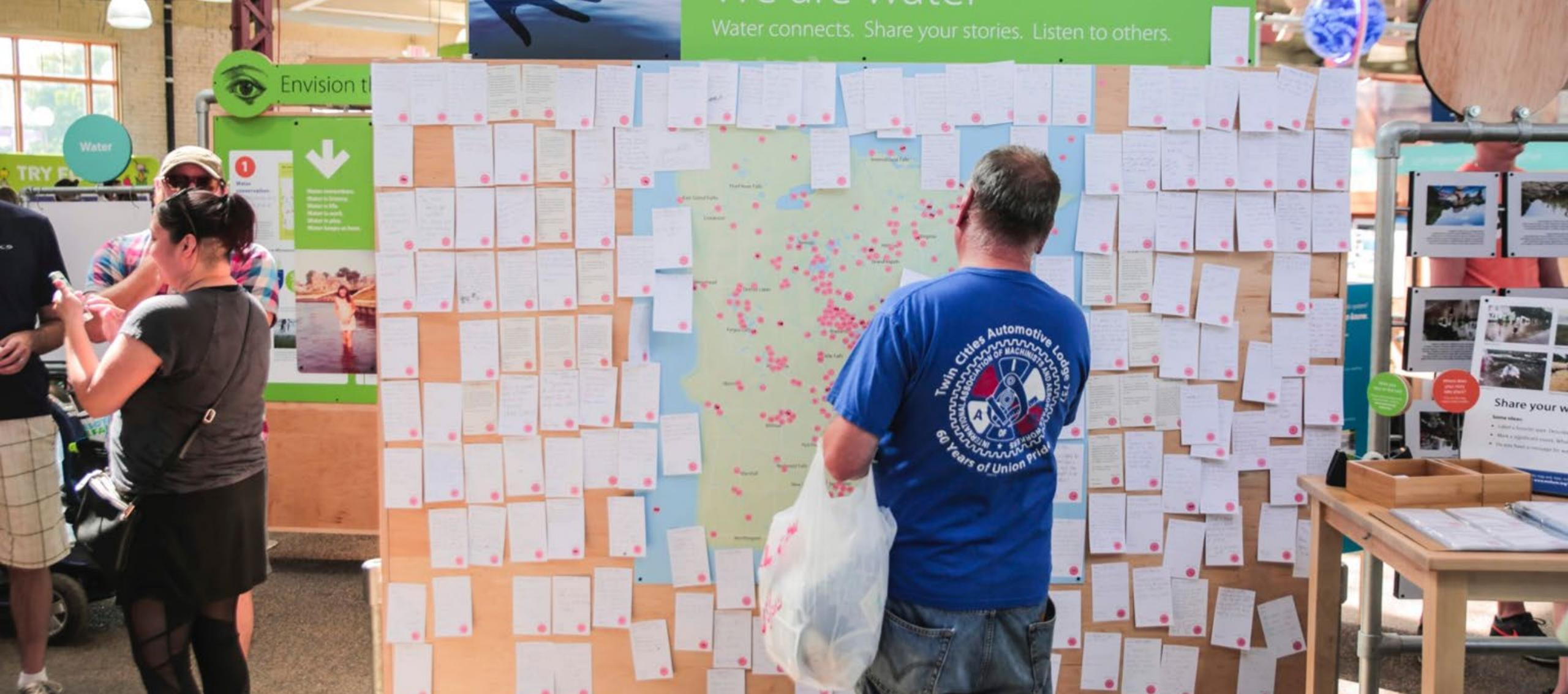
Davenport and Seekamp (2013)

# Forms new partnerships and friendships



**Some collaborations  
and partnerships  
endure for years.**





Creates space for difficult conversations

# Broadens organizational focus



# Questions?

A wide-angle photograph of a lake at sunset. The sky is a gradient of blue, orange, and yellow. The water reflects the light, and a dark, silhouetted shoreline with trees is visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere is calm and scenic.

**Jana Larson**  
Program Coordinator  
[Jana.Larson@state.mn.us](mailto:Jana.Larson@state.mn.us)

**Rachel Busse-Aswar**  
Program Manager  
[rachel@mnhum.org](mailto:rachel@mnhum.org)



# Addressing Nitrate in Southeast Minnesota: Public Health Intervention

## July (Q2) 2025 Status Update



Kim Kaiser | Minnesota Department of Agriculture

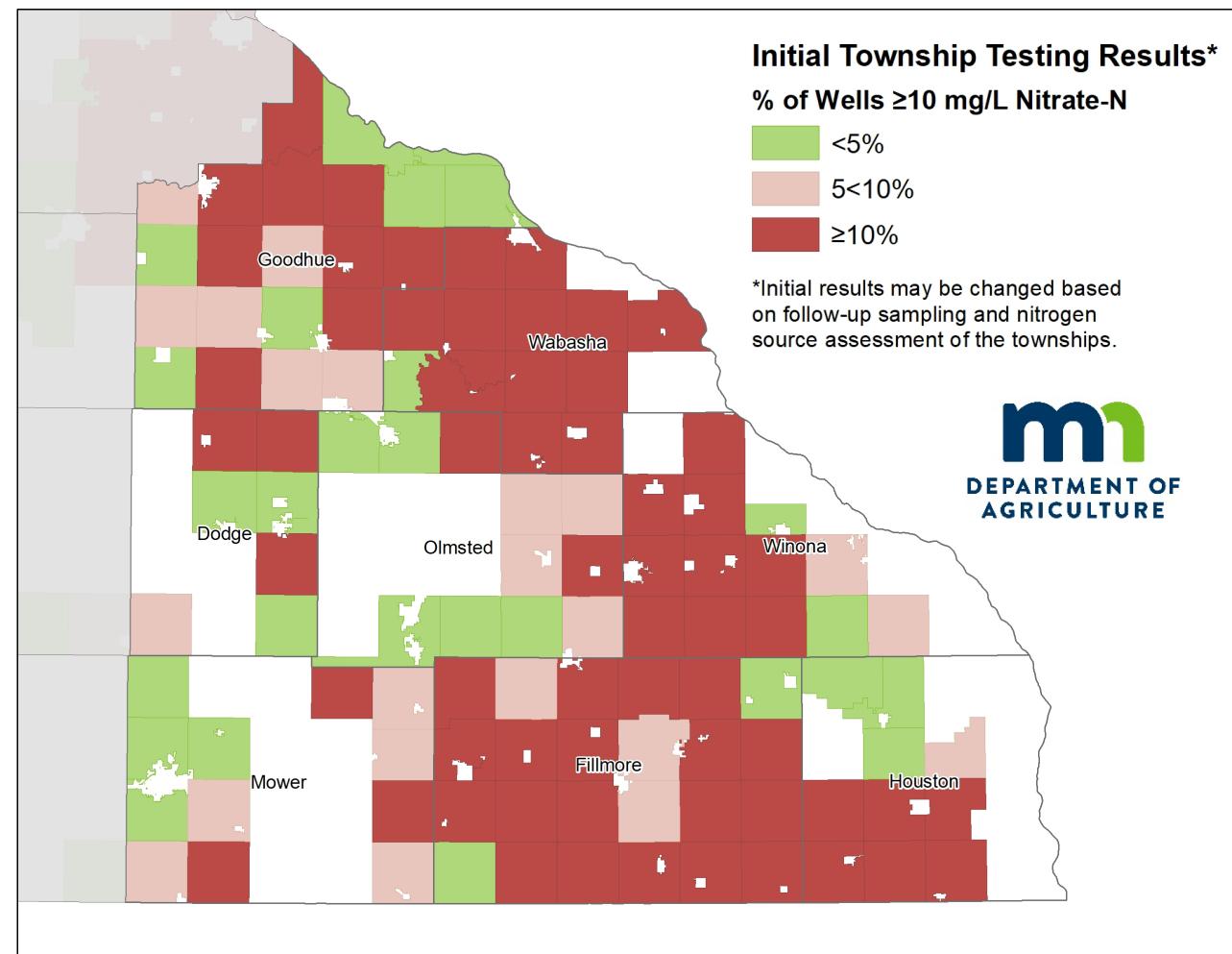
Sophia Walsh | Minnesota Department of Health



# Testing reveals nitrate private wells

- Community water systems: Safe Drinking Water Act protects consumers
- Private wells have little protection
  - Pre-code wells especially vulnerable
- Health concern is methemoglobinemia

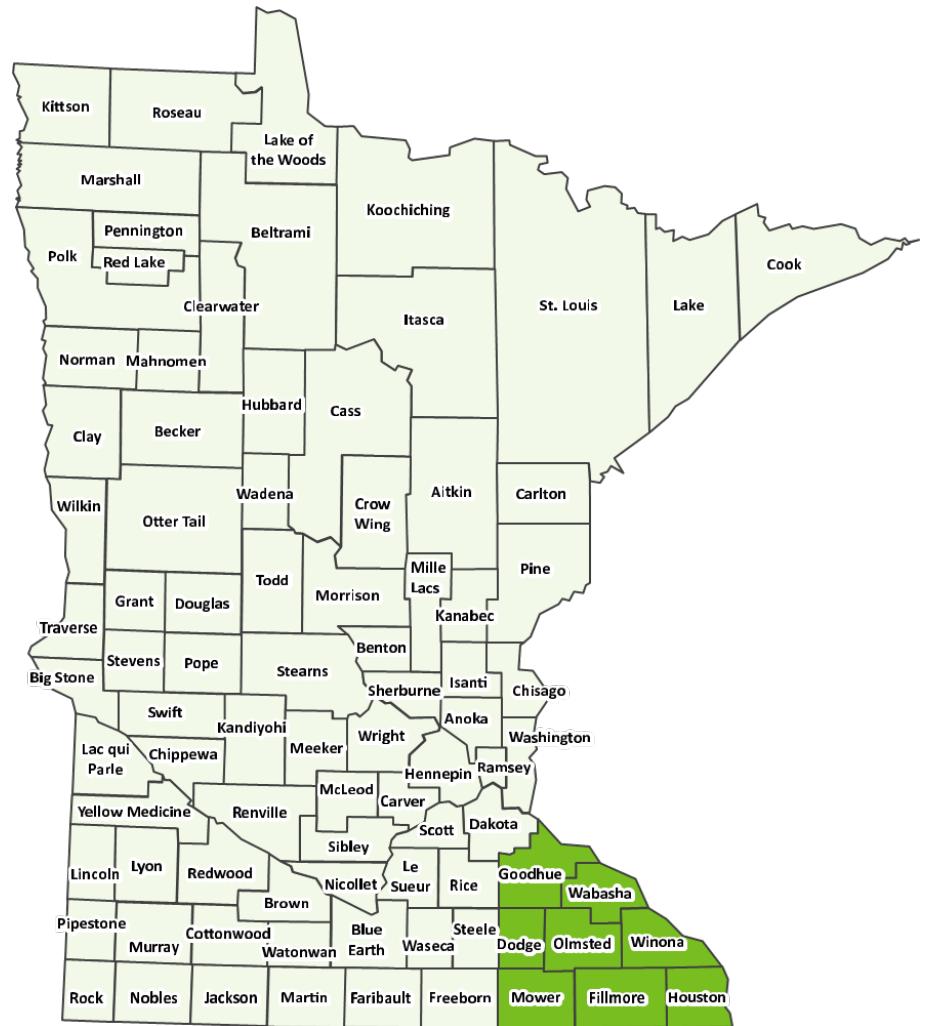
## Township Testing results for 8 county area



# EPA directed state agencies

**Develop a coordinated and comprehensive work plan to reduce nitrate contamination of drinking water aquifers in eight southeastern Minnesota counties.**

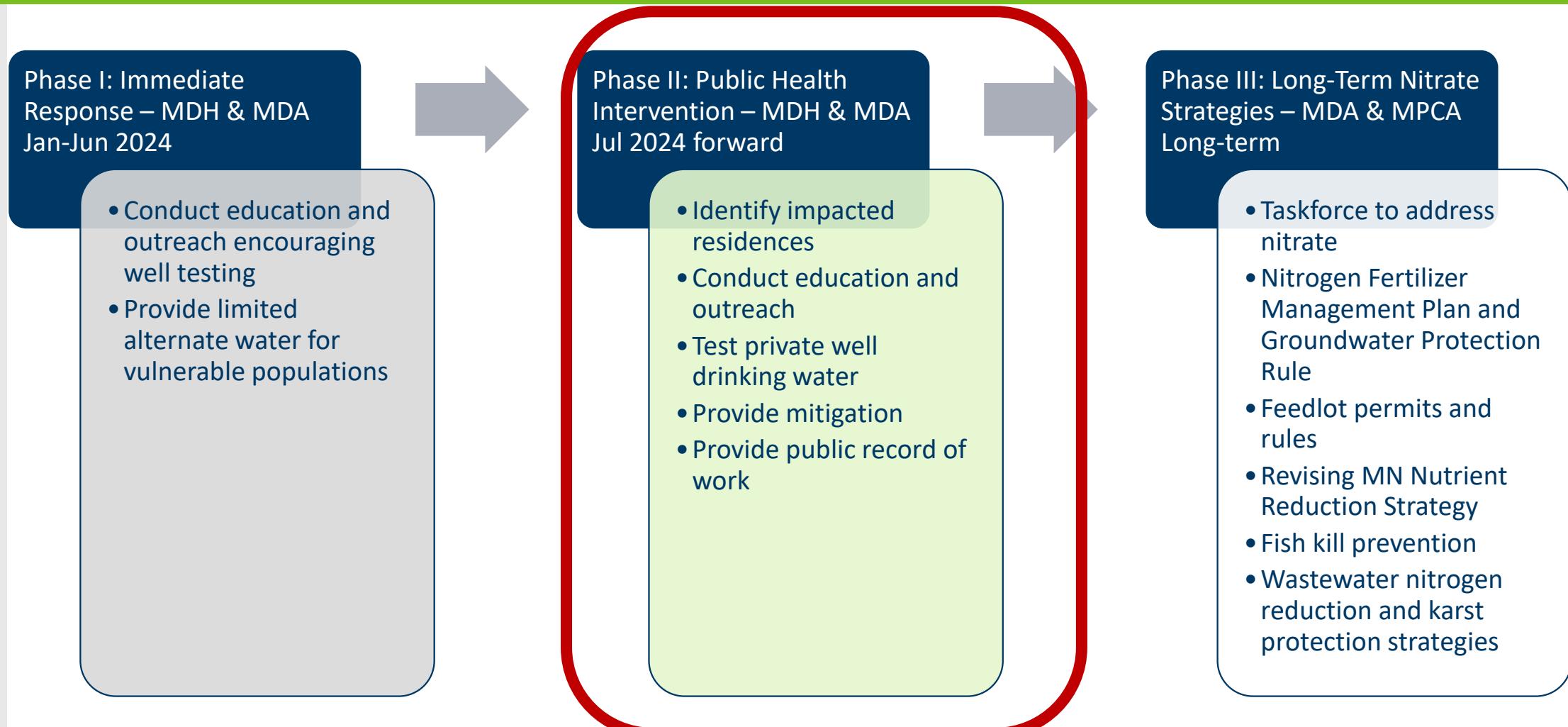
Letter, Minnesota's response, reports:  
[Response to Nitrate in Southeast Minnesota](#)



# Components to EPA directive

- Develop coordinated communication plan
- Identify all private wells
- Provide education and outreach to well users and community water system customers
- Offer testing for all private wells
- Offer remediation for wells that exceed drinking water guidance
- Establish public access to data and records
- Report quarterly to US EPA

# Workplan: three phases



# CWF helps fund public health intervention

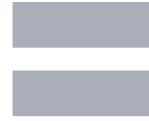
**CWF (FY25)**  
\$2.79M to MDH

- Well inventory
- Testing
- Education, outreach, community engagement
- Staff capacity (local and state)



**General Fund (FY25)**  
\$2.8M to MDA

- Home water treatment
- Option to transfer to MDH for a mitigation program



Fund Year 1  
of a 10-year public  
health intervention

**Going forward, SEMN work (not mitigation) is folded into the general CWF Private Well Initiative**  
\$6M for FY26-27

# What are we concerned about in private wells?

## Protect your health!

Test your well water for:



- Coliform Bacteria**  
(Every year)
- Nitrate**  
(Every year)
- Arsenic**  
(At least once)
- Lead**  
(At least once)
- Manganese**  
(At least once)

Testing is even more important if young children drink the water.



# Aligns with Clean Water Council Strategic Plan

**Vision:** Drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota.

***Goal 2: Ensure that private well users have safe, sufficient, and equitable access to drinking water.***

- Testing
- Mitigation
- Policy

**Action:** Support a ten-year effort to give every private well user the opportunity to test for five major contaminants, with an initial focus on areas most vulnerable to contamination.

# The Power of Partnerships



# Phase II: Public Health Intervention

| Component  | Who is implementing                                    |
|--|--|
| Free water tests                                     | Southeast Minnesota Water Analysis Laboratory (SEMWAL) |
| Mitigation for households with nitrate above 10 mg/L | SEMWAL and counties                                    |
| Well inventory to locate private wells               | Counties and SWCDs                                     |
| Outreach & education                                 | Everyone!  |



**TAP-IN**

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR SE MN

**Leverage and elevate Tap-In and existing efforts**

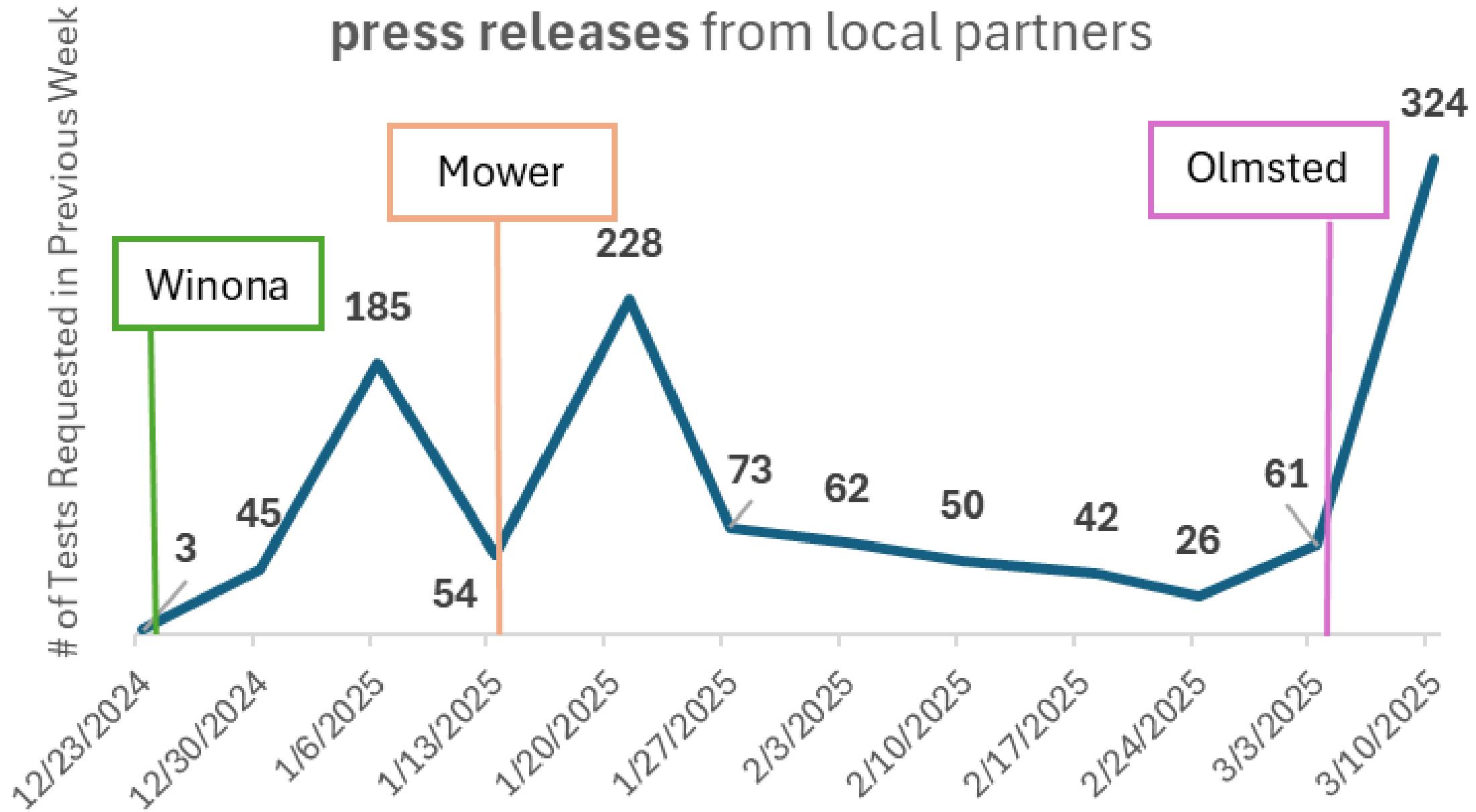
# Traditional Communication

**Starting a family?**  
Now is a great time to test your private well water.

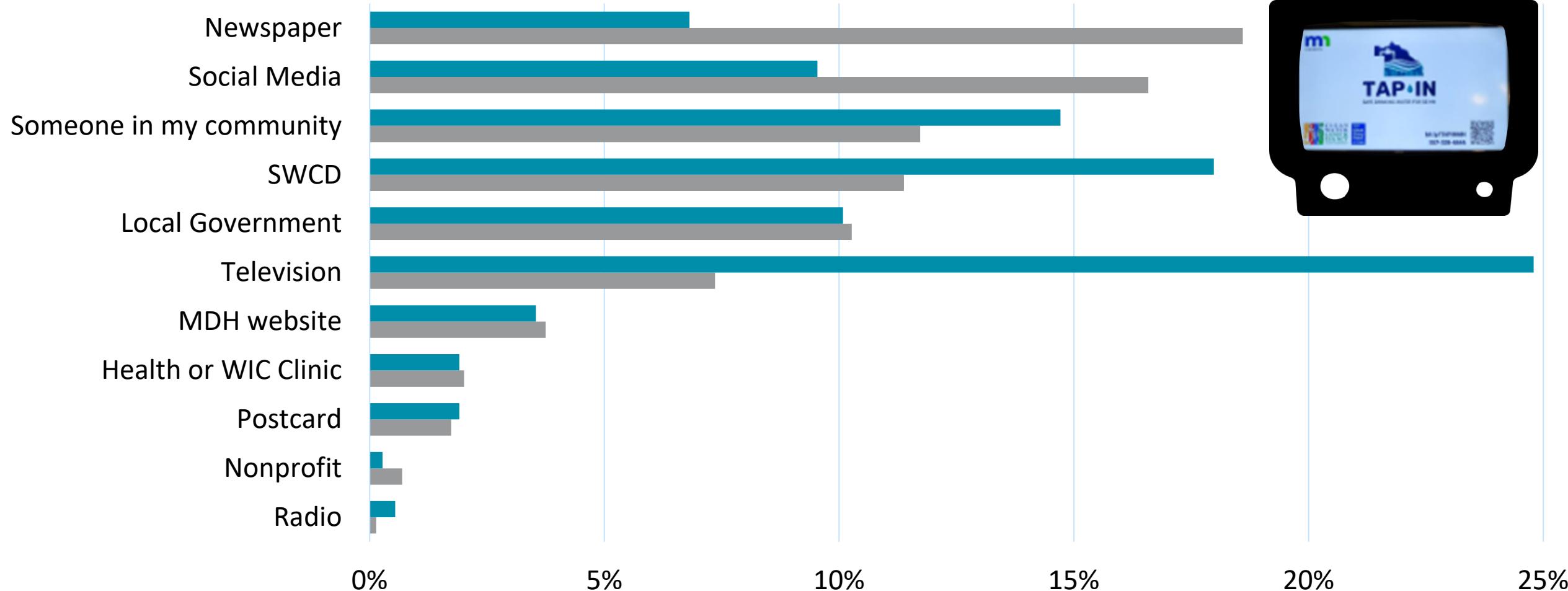


- Social Media
- TV
- Radio
- Newspaper
- MDH Website
- Private Well Education Program (UMN)

# Test kit requests increased the weeks following press releases from local partners



# Television, SWCDs, and word of mouth played a bigger role in Quarter 2 compared to previous quarters



How did you hear about the free well test kit?

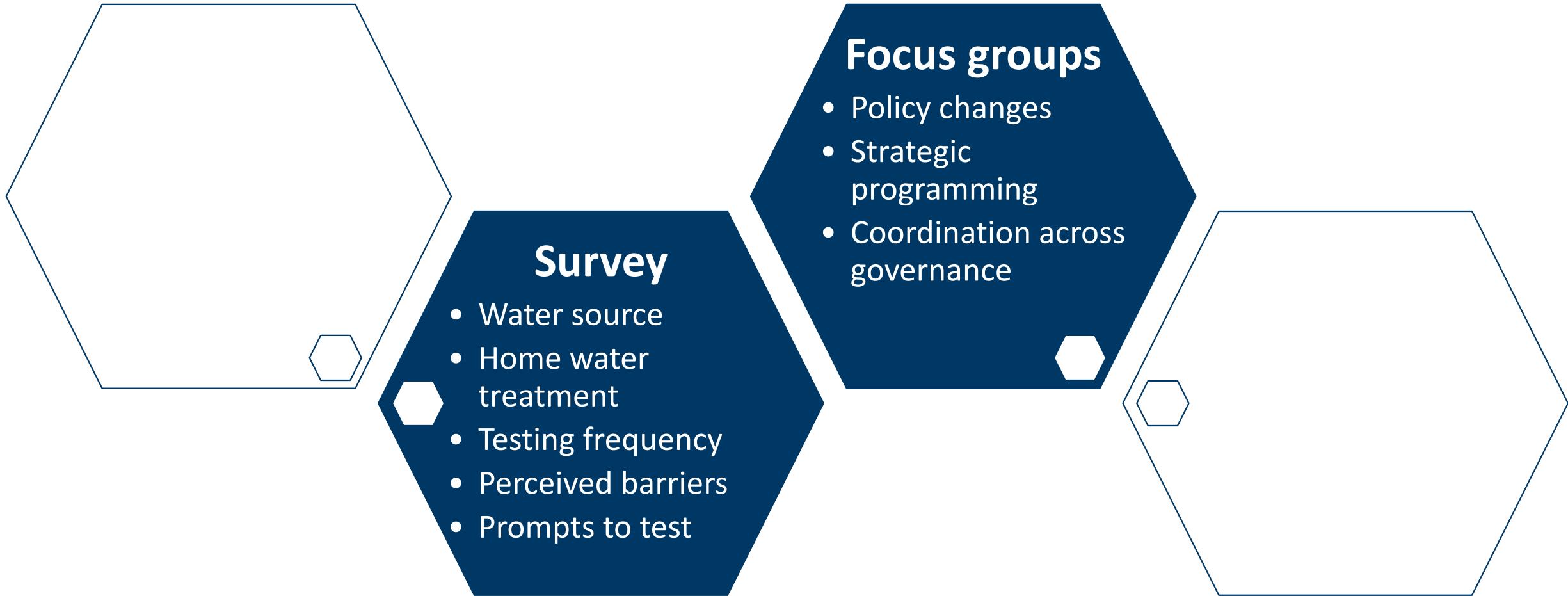
## Targeted Outreach

- Private Well Peer Leader Network, UMN Extension
- Groundwater Awareness Week, Drinking Water Week
- Realtor CEUs, Buying and Selling a Home brochures
- **Well mitigation navigator with county laboratory**

Starting a  
family?  
Now is a  
great time  
to test your  
private well  
water.



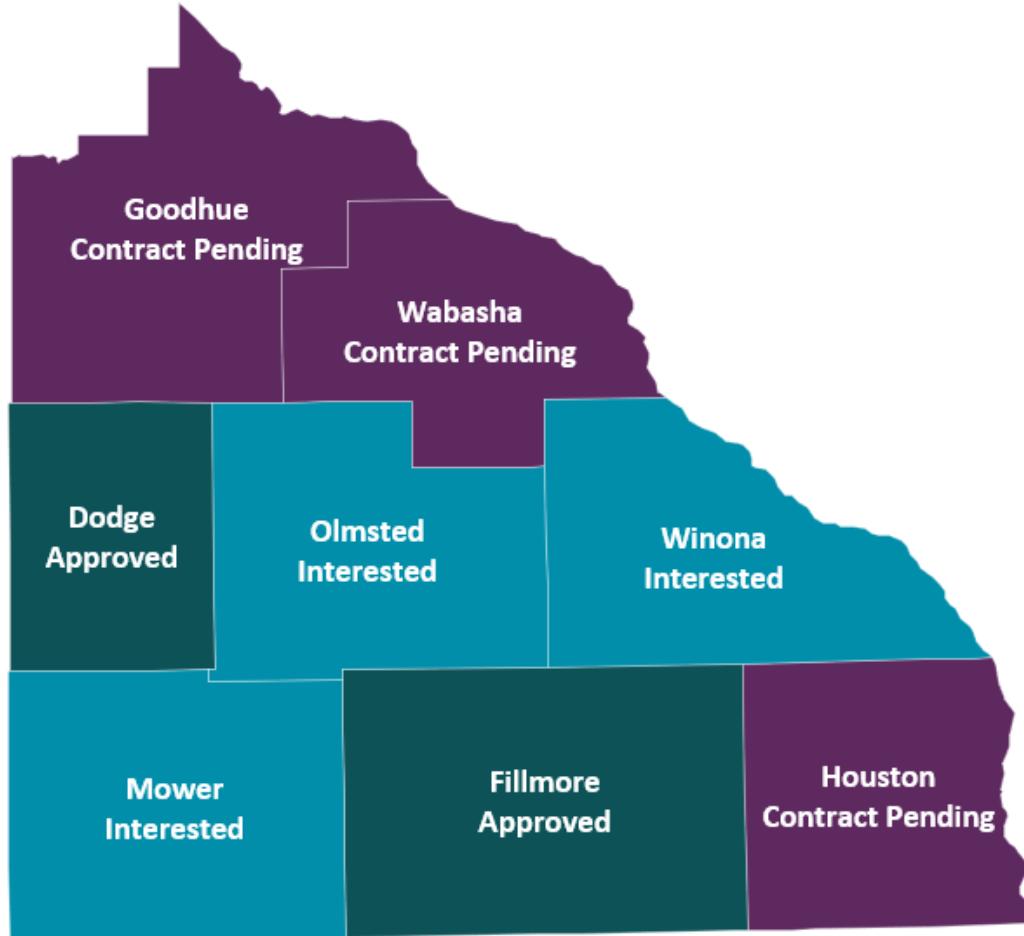
# Understanding private well users' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior



# Marketing firm updates

- Working with [MP+G](#)
- Finished up local partners interviews in early April.
- Two focus group of private well users were hosted in early May.
- Evaluation and recommendations by end of July.
- Launch of outreach campaign in later summer 2025.

# Well Inventory

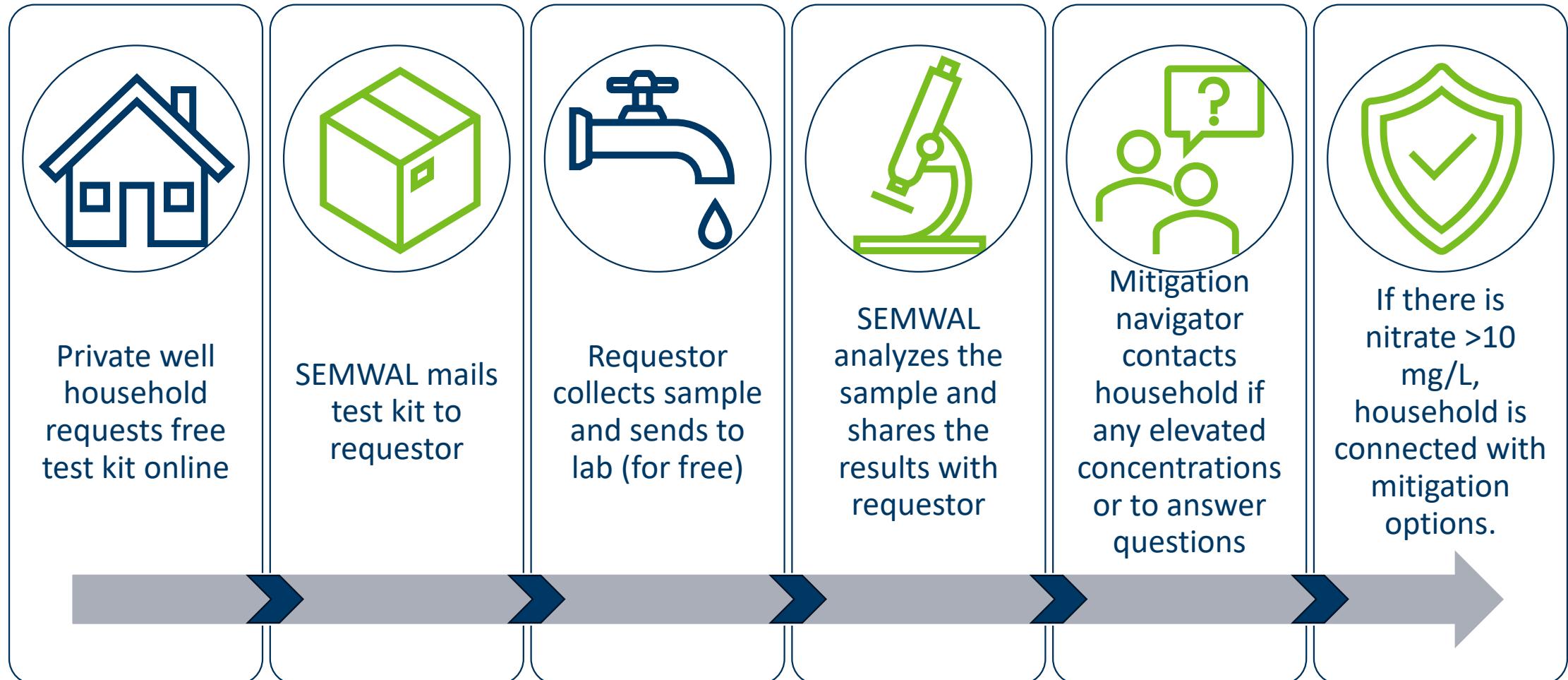


- Identify all private wells supplying drinking water for a home
- Provide information to update the County Well Index (which updates Minnesota Well Index)

# Well inventory Progress

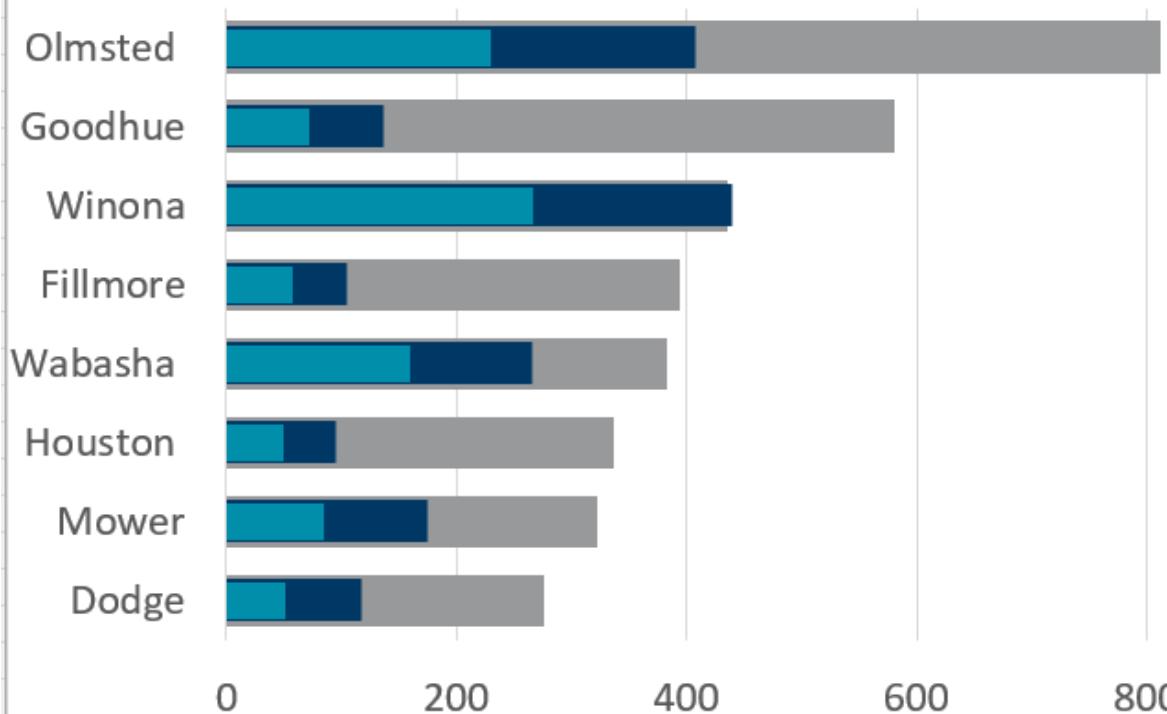
- Collaboration with Minnesota Geologic Survey
  - Training
  - Data Quality Control/Quality Assurance
- Dodge County
  - 167 wells identified by county
- Fillmore County
  - Staff training with MGS

# Water test kit request and results process



# Test kit requests by county

Winona is the only county that had 10% of its anticipated private well households **request well test kits**



| County   | # test kits requested |
|----------|-----------------------|
| Olmsted  | 408                   |
| Goodhue  | 137                   |
| Winona   | 440                   |
| Fillmore | 104                   |
| Wabasha  | 265                   |
| Houston  | 95                    |
| Mower    | 174                   |
| Dodge    | 117                   |

■ 1st year target for county

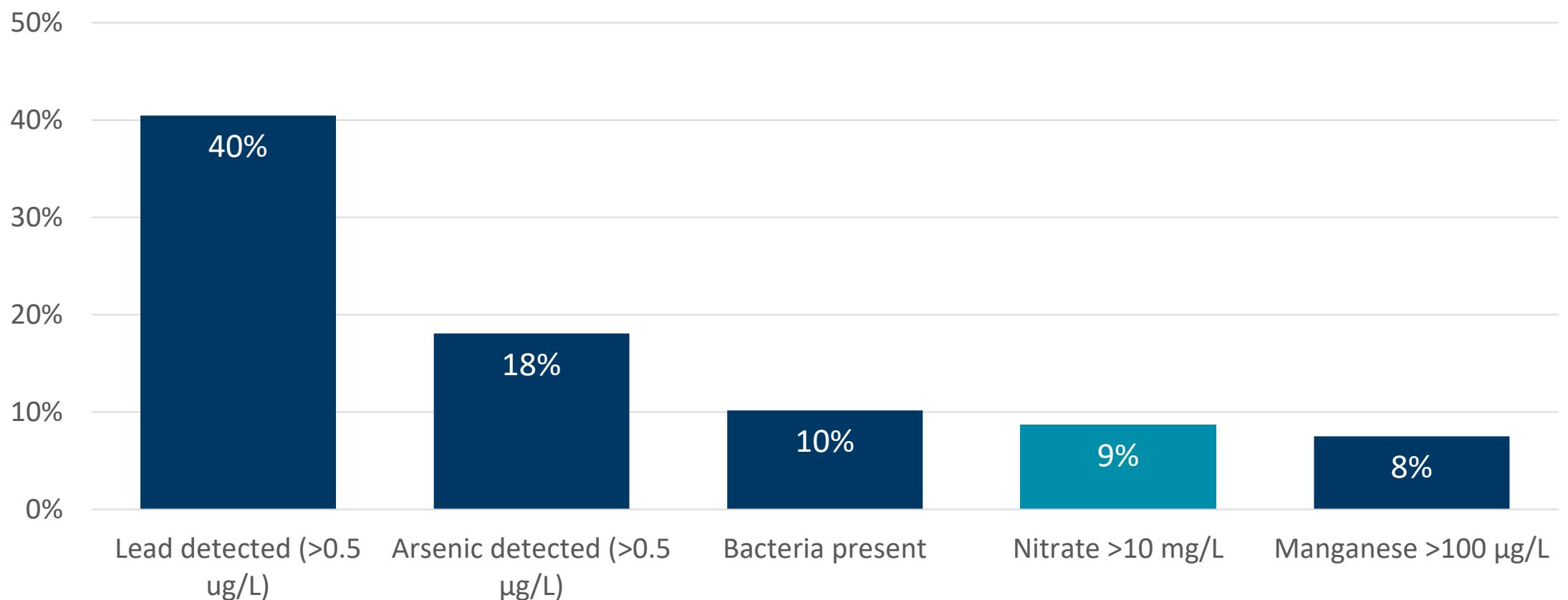
■ # test kits requested

■ # samples returned/analyzed

# Private well test results

Nine percent of samples had **nitrate** concentrations >10 mg/L

(n=1,013)



- Appropriation became available July 2024
  - JPA signed with Olmsted County
- Reached out directly to MDA private well testing participants – over 1,200
  - Township Testing
  - Private Well Pesticide Sampling Program
  - Southeast Volunteer Monitoring Network
- October 2024: 1<sup>st</sup> Reverse Osmosis was installed
- June 2025: Interagency agreement with MDH to establish and administer a mitigation program.

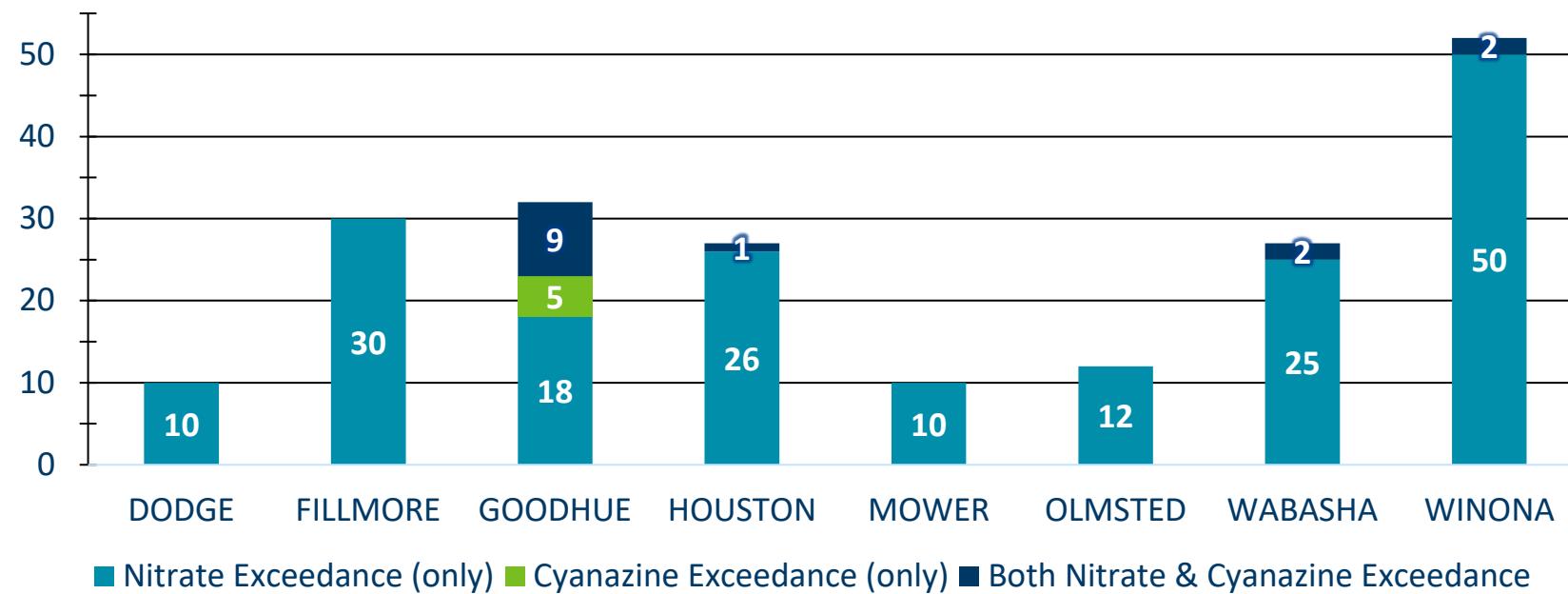


Example of a reverse osmosis system

# Reverse Osmosis Installations

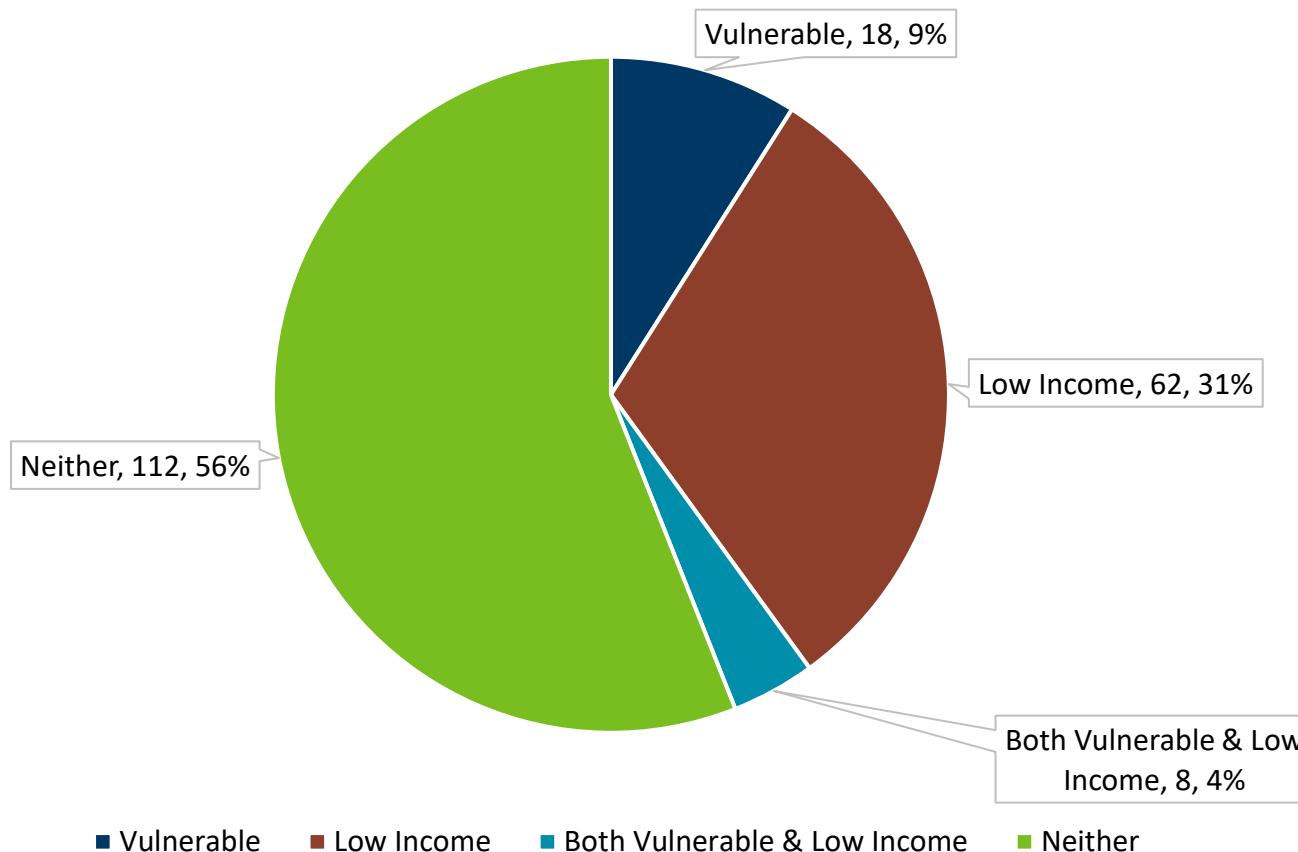
- 200 – systems-installed by the end of June 2025
  - 19 exceeded for both nitrate (10 mg/L) and cyanazine (1 µg/L)
  - 5 exceeded only cyanazine HRL

Locations of Reverse Osmosis Systems Installed in Southeast Minnesota

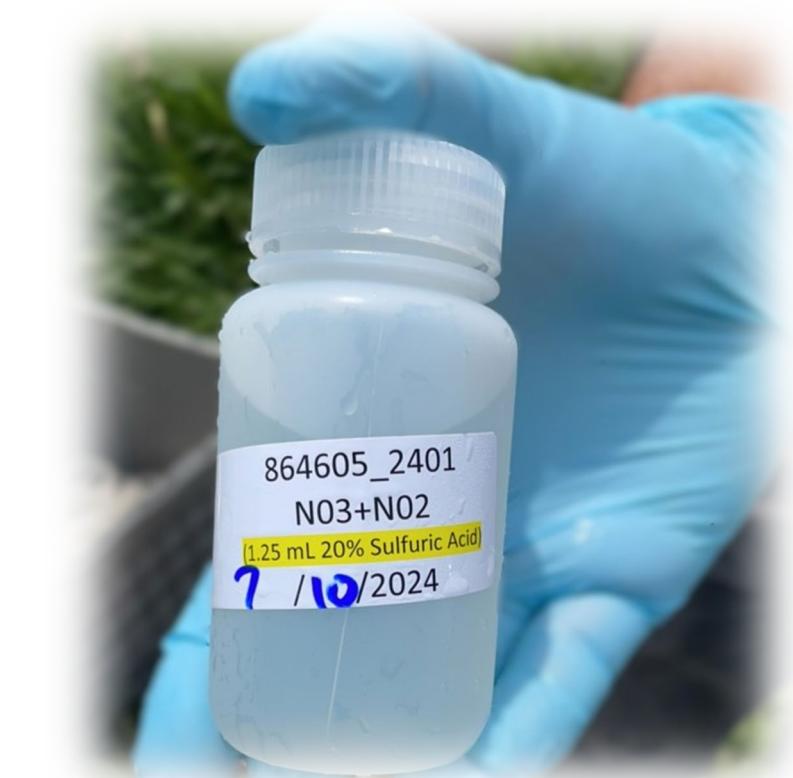


# Reverse Osmosis Installations

## Reverse Osmosis Installations at Households with a Vulnerable Population and Low Income



- Nitrate Follow-up Sampling
  - All households with installed RO systems receive a follow-up sample to test the effectiveness of the system
  - All below the health risk limit of 10 mg/L nitrate-nitrogen (n= 162)
  - Median post-treatment (RO) sample was 1.5 mg/L (n=162)
  - Median reduction 88% (n=105)



## Part I: Cost data and evaluation of mitigation options



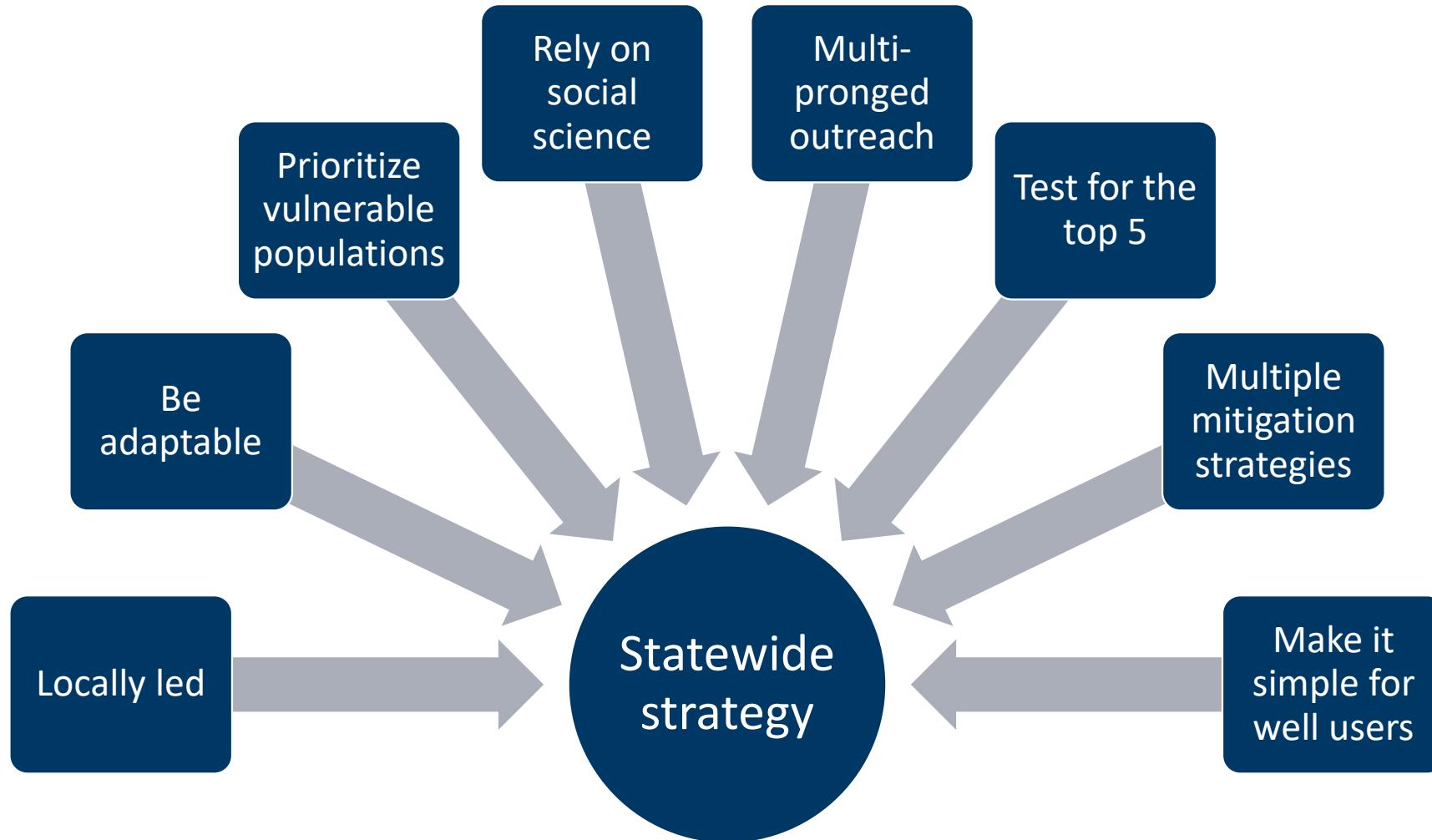
- Evaluation of mitigation options to address contaminants in private well water
- Estimates for proportion of water quality issues could be addressed by which intervention(s)
- Decision tree for best mitigation at a household level
- Considerations for scaling findings to a statewide level

## Part II: Public health cost-benefit



- Costs and benefits of offering free annual private well testing
- Costs and benefits of free or income-based mitigation

# Approaches to carry forward





# Questions?

**Kim Kaiser**

[kimberly.kaiser@state.mn.us](mailto:kimberly.kaiser@state.mn.us)

651-201-6280

**Sophia Walsh**

[sophia.walsh@state.mn.us](mailto:sophia.walsh@state.mn.us)

507-206-2735

# Clean Water Council Scoring Rubric (7/16/2025)

**Purpose and Prioritization:** The Clean Water Council's scoring rubric is a tool to help the Council formally and consistently evaluate proposals using clear, shared criteria. While the rubric provides a structured evaluation framework, the Clean Water Council may prioritize proposals for funding based on its collective judgment, regardless of score.

| Criteria                            | Updated Evaluation Statement as of 6/24/2025   | Points Available |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Water Quality Impact                | <b>Water quality is the top priority</b> , with a focus on <b>measurable improvements to surface water, groundwater, or drinking water</b> . Prioritizes implementation of proven or innovative practices, with research included if it directly supports implementation. May also provide co-benefits that address other environmental concerns, including water quantity.* | 0-15<br>_____    |
| Strategic Alignment                 | <b>Aligns with Clean Water Council Strategic Plan and state-approved water plans; coordinates effectively</b> across local, state, and federal initiatives.  | 0-10<br>_____    |
| Measurable Progress & Feasibility   | <b>Defines clear, outcome-based goals and measurable indicators</b> ; shows historical progress or a <b>feasible path to long-term systems change</b> . May include research, monitoring, or planning activities that support measurable outcomes.   | 0-10<br>_____    |
| Financial Leverage & Sustainability | <b>Supplements</b> vs supplants; potential for leveraging local or partner support; if partially funded, project is scalable   | 0-5<br>_____     |
| Community Value                     | <b>Engages landowners, local communities, and underserved groups; addresses environmental justice and equity</b> considerations; <b>direct community support</b> is evident.   | 0-5<br>_____     |
| Outreach & Communications           | <b>Communicates outcomes clearly</b> ; includes outreach strategies; <b>acknowledges Clean Water Fund use</b> in public materials (e.g., Logo displayed, CWF mentioned)  | 0-5<br>_____     |

# Scoring Rubric Guide for Council Members

The scoring rubric provides a clear, consistent framework for evaluating proposals in alignment with the Clean Water Council's strategic priorities.

Here are a few guiding steps to help with the scoring process:

- 1. Review Each Proposal Thoroughly**

Read each proposal carefully and assess how it addresses each rubric criterion.

- 2. Score Each Section Independently**

Assign a score within the specified range for each section, based on how strongly the proposal meets that criteria.

- 3. Be Consistent**

Use a consistent scoring approach across all proposals you review. For example, if you tend to score conservatively, apply that same approach for each project.

- 4. Provide Comments and Questions**

Where possible, include comments or questions for each section. These notes are valuable for agencies and the Interagency Coordination Team to address during or after presentations. This is especially helpful when reviewing multiple proposals over time, as it provides context for Council discussion and follow-up.

- 5. Maintain Flexibility**

The rubric is a decision-making tool, not an automatic approval or denial mechanism. Final funding recommendations reflect both rubric scores and the Council's collective judgment.

---

## \* Key Considerations for Water Quality Impact:

- **Water Quantity:** While water quality is the top priority, proposals may provide co-benefits for water quantity, such as improving water availability, storage, or flow conditions within a watershed.
- **Other Environmental Concerns:** Additional environmental co-benefits may include habitat restoration, biodiversity, climate resiliency, or protection of natural resources that directly support water quality and quantity goals.

# Scoring Rubric Overview

Clean Water Council Meeting

July 21, 2025

# Agenda

1. Purpose of the Rubric
2. Key Criteria Overview
3. Strategic Plan Alignment
4. Proposed Implementation
5. Discussion & Next Steps

# Purpose of the Rubric

- Consistent evaluation process
- Structure for funding decisions
- Aligns with Council goals
- Supports future ICT engagement

# Clean Water Fund Strategic Plan

**Our Mission:** To protect, enhance, and restore water quality for Minnesotans



## Surface Water:

*Fishable and swimmable waters.*

- ~ **Monitor and assess** surface water health statewide.
- ~ **Prevent & reduce pollution** of surface waters
- ~ **Reach 70% swimmable and 67% fishable waters** through targeted and broad conservation efforts.

## Drinking Water:

*Safe drinking water for all.*

- ~ **Protect public water systems**
- ~ Ensure **private well users have safe & reliable water**

## Groundwater:

*Clean and sustainable groundwater.*

- ~ **Protect and improve** groundwater quality.
- ~ **Ensure sustainable long-term trends** in aquifer levels
- ~ **Prevent impacts** on surface waters



## Water Legacy:

*All Minnesotans value & protect water resources*

- ~ **Build local capacity** to protect & restore water resources.

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## Water Legacy:

*All Minnesotans value & protect water resources*

- ~ **Build local capacity** to protect & restore water resources.

- Water Quality Impact
- Strategic Alignment
- Measurable Progress
- Financial Leverage
- Community Value
- Outreach & Communication

# Proposed Implementation

1. All proposals submitted at the same time
2. Council members score and submit questions in advance
3. Scores and questions posted 2 weeks before presentations
4. Agencies present (up to 15-20 minutes each)
5. Additional questions submitted post-presentation
6. Agencies respond in writing
7. BOC reviews scores and follow-ups to shape recommendations

# Questions & Discussion