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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Departments of Environment and Health Offer Free Water Tests to Private Well Owners**

**Santa Fe** – New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) are hosting a no-cost Domestic Well Water Testing event in Farmington on August 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> at the Sycamore Park Community Center. Although well owners are encouraged to periodically test their drinking water, such tests can be costly, starting at \$150.

This money-saving opportunity is the chance for San Juan County households to field test their well water for pH, specific conductance, and the levels of fluoride, iron, sulfate, nitrate, and manganese. These constituents may be naturally occurring or result from sources including fertilizer, animal waste, septic tanks, and refuse dumps. Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can be dangerous to pregnant women and infants, while other contaminants may lead to aesthetic nuisances and other health problems.

Approximately 100 *E. coli* bacteria tests will also be offered during the event, on a first-come, first served basis. To participate in bacteria testing, well owners will need a specialized bottle, and follow specific instructions for taking their water sample. Bottles with instructions can be picked up at the Sycamore Park Community Center during the event, and must be returned prior to the end of the event for subsequent analysis.

Additionally well owners will be able to screen for the arsenic level in their water, which is not commonly included in general testing. Arsenic is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state at concentrations that exceed recommended drinking water quality health standards.

“Drinking water with high levels of arsenic over many years can cause health problems in some people,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Retta Ward, MPH. “This is an example of why well owners are encouraged to know and understand the quality of the water they are drinking and this is an opportunity to do that.”

About 20 percent of New Mexicans receive their water from private wells, which are not monitored routinely. To support well owners, the Health Department offers information about various well topics at <https://nmtracking.org/water>.

“The Environment Department is committed to providing communities with the advice and assistance they need to ensure that clean drinking water is available,” said NMED Cabinet

Secretary Ryan Flynn. “We hold these no-cost water fairs around the state throughout the year. Free water testing enables New Mexicans, who rely on private, domestic well water, to have the knowledge they need to assure that their drinking water is safe.”

The event will be in Activity Room 112 at the Sycamore Park Community Center, 1051 Sycamore Street, Farmington, NM 87401 from 12:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. on August 24<sup>th</sup>, and from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on August 25<sup>th</sup>. These free tests will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies are available. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

To have water tested, residents need to take a sample of their water to the event. The departments suggest these tips:

- Use a clean glass or plastic container that holds at least a quart of water (such as in a 1-liter soda bottle or gallon milk jug). The container should not have a strong odor (avoid pickle jars and vinegar bottles).
- Collect the water before it runs through any water treatment/filters such as an R.O. or a water softener. (If the home has a whole house filtration system, collect the water at the well head).
- Let the water run for a couple of minutes before filling the bottle/container.
- Fill the bottle with the water as close to the time of testing as possible (right before coming to the expo).
- Label the bottle with your name and phone number.
- To participate in *E. coli* bacteria testing, you will need to pick up a specialized bottle and instructions at the event.

Along with the water sample, residents should include basic information known about the well such as: well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, pvc), well latitude/longitude, and distance from well to the nearest septic tank/leachfield system. A sample form for gathering this useful information is available at:

[https://nmtracking.org/media/cms\\_page\\_media/160/Well.Test.Form\\_1.pdf](https://nmtracking.org/media/cms_page_media/160/Well.Test.Form_1.pdf).

If well owners are unable to attend the event but would like to have their water tested, they may have their sample brought to the event by a family member or neighbor as long as the bottle is clearly labeled with their name, phone number, and address and information about the well is attached. Well owners who recently had their well water tested at the San Juan County Fair are welcome to bring their test results letter to the Sycamore Community Center to discuss their water test results with knowledgeable NMED scientists, engineers and technicians staffing the event.

The departments only test water that comes from homes that rely on private wells for drinking water. Water from households that are connected to city/community/public water system is periodically tested and those results are available at: [https://nmtracking.org/en/data\\_query/](https://nmtracking.org/en/data_query/) , [https://nmtracking.org/en/environ\\_exposure/water-qual/community-drinking-water-data/](https://nmtracking.org/en/environ_exposure/water-qual/community-drinking-water-data/) and <https://dww.water.net.env.nm.gov/DWW/> .

For further information about this water testing opportunity, call the Environment Department at 505-827-1046.

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