

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR**

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.*

**Contact:** Matthew Maez, Communications Director  
New Mexico Environment Department  
505.670.8911 | matthew.maez@state.nm.us

### **Environment and Health Departments to offer 100 free domestic water and bacteria well tests in Ruidoso for McBride Fire Response**

**RUIDOSO** – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) are hosting a free domestic well water testing event at Ruidoso Swimming Pool May 7, 2022, in response to the recent McBride fire in the area. NMED and DOH expedited the scheduling of this Water Fair and are providing an added free service of bacteria testing for those affected by the fire.

After a wildfire, private wells can be contaminated and unsafe to use for drinking water and other purposes. Even if a wildfire has not impacted your property, surveys show the majority of New Mexico's private well users have not had their water tested, even though most do not have water treatment systems installed.

"The destruction caused by wildfires is absolutely emotionally and financially devastating to families," said **NMED Cabinet Secretary James Kenney**. "The knowledge your private well water is safe is one way that Gov. Lujan Grisham's administration is helping residents of Lincoln County."

The free testing will be available from **8:30–12:00 p.m. Saturday, May 7** at Ruidoso Swimming Pool, 515 Sudderth Dr., Ruidoso, NM 88345.

Tests will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to the first 100 participants or while supplies are available. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

To have your well water tested, residents need to bring a sample of their water to the event. Use these guidelines to ensure the sample is collected correctly:

- Let the tap run for 2-3 minutes before collecting the sample.
- Fill a clean glass or plastic container without any strong odors with at least a quart or liter of your well water.
- If the home has a whole house filtration system or softener system, collect the water at the well head prior to any filtration or softener systems when possible.
- Fill the container with water as close to the time of testing as possible.

Along with the well water sample, residents should bring basic information known about the well such as well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, PVC), well latitude and longitude and distance from the well to the nearest septic tank or leachfield system.

If property owners are unable to attend the event but would like to have their well water tested, they may have a sample brought to the event by a family member or neighbor, provided the bottle is clearly labeled

and has the owner's name, phone number, address and well information attached. Only water that comes from homes that rely on private wells for drinking water will be tested. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

The state's "water fairs" provide an opportunity for well owners to measure pH, specific conductance and levels of nitrates in their water. These constituents may be naturally occurring or result from sources including fertilizer, animal waste and septic tanks. Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can be dangerous to pregnant women and infants. Other contaminants may lead to other health problems and aesthetic nuisances.

Water samples are also tested for arsenic levels. Arsenic is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state, sometimes at concentrations that exceed drinking water quality health standards.

The upkeep of private wells is the responsibility of the well owner. While the state's Environment and Health Departments conduct water fairs to help educate private well owners about drinking water and well maintenance, these state agencies do not have jurisdiction over private wells.

An average well water test costs a family about \$150 but is completely free at this event. NMED has tested 121 private drinking water wells over four water fairs providing \$18,150 in value to communities in New Mexico since July 1, 2021. NMED tracks its investments in communities as part of its performance measures and targeted [investing \\$65 million](#) throughout the state in fiscal year 2022.

Water from public water systems (i.e., local water utilities) is tested periodically and those results are available [here](#).

More information about the water fair program is available [here](#).

More information about wells, water quality and safety is available [here](#).

For more information about these water fairs, please contact the Environment Department at 505-827-2900. Visit NMED's calendar, [here](#), to find out about future water fairs and other events.

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