

## **PRESS RELEASE: Free Well Water Nitrate Testing at the Clearwater County Fair, August 1 and 2, 2:00pm-6:00pm**

**From:** Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District

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The Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will host a water testing clinic at the SWCD booth at the 2014 Clearwater County Fair. Fairgoers can bring in well water samples to be tested for nitrate, free of charge, on Friday, August 1, 2:00pm – 6:00pm, or on Saturday, August 2, 2:00pm – 6:00pm. SWCD staff will test the samples for nitrate and results will be available in about 5 minutes.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that landowners test private well water every year to ensure safe drinking water. At the Minnesota Department of Agriculture nitrate testing clinics between 1996 and 2006, 10% of samples exceeded the EPA drinking water standard of 10 mg/L. Nitrates are the most common contaminants in Minnesota groundwater and MDA data shows that nitrate levels in some Minnesota aquifers are trending upward.

Nitrate levels are of special interest due to health risks related to exposure. Infants who consume high amounts of nitrates are at risk to develop Methemoglobinemia, also known as Blue Baby Syndrome. This disease is potentially fatal and first appears as blue coloration of the infant's fingers, lips, ears, etc. Pregnant women also may be at risk along with people who have specific metabolic conditions.

**The water testing clinic will take place at the Clearwater SWCD booth in the commercial exhibit building (hockey arena) at the fairgrounds in Bagley. Community members who wish to have their water tested should bring a half-cup (4 ounce) sample to the booth during the Friday or Saturday testing hours. A separate sample should be brought for each well (home, livestock, etc.) to be tested.**

**Samples should be taken no more than 24 hours before they are tested. The water can be collected in any clean container, such as a plastic water bottle or glass jar. It is important to let the tap run 5-10 minutes before collecting the sample and samples should be kept refrigerated until tested.**

**Homeowners with distillation units, reverse osmosis or other nitrate removal systems should take two water samples - one before and one after the treatment process. This will determine if the system is working. Homeowners with just a water softener need to take only one sample, either before or after the water passes through the water softener. Water that is cloudy from clay or iron may not be tested.**

Community members who are interested in having additional water tests performed can stop by the Clearwater SWCD office in the USDA Service Center (312 Main Avenue N, Bagley) to pick up testing kits that they can submit by mail for analysis at a private lab. The cost of these tests, which may include E-Coli, Coliform Bacteria, Lead, Arsenic, Iron and Hardness levels, varies depending on the test(s) selected by the consumer.

The mission of the Clearwater SWCD is to promote the wise use and improvement of our county resources, in order that future generations will inherit an economically viable county that has made wise choices in resource management. Agricultural producers, lakeshore owners and other landowners interested in protecting water quality or reducing erosion on their sites are encouraged to contact the SWCD about options and programs.

The free nitrate testing clinic at the Clearwater County Fair is possible through the support of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Clearwater SWCD. Please contact the Clearwater SWCD with questions about the nitrate clinic or other conservation questions.

Further information about nitrate contamination of well water is available on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture website at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/en/protecting/waterprotection/nitrate.aspx> or go to <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/> and search for the term "nitrate."