



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Center for Health Protection, Environmental Public Health

Kate Brown, Governor

Oregon
Health
Authority

800 NE Oregon St Ste 640
Portland OR 97232
971-673-0975
FAX: 971-673-0979
TTY: 711

April 9, 2015

TO: The Honorable Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair
House Energy & Environment Committee

FROM: Steven Wagner, MPH
Center for Health Protection
Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: Background for House Bill 3076, Testing of wells that supply ground
water for domestic purposes

Chair Vega Pederson and members of the committee; I am Steve Wagner, administrator of the Center for Health Protection, from the Public Health Division within the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). I am here to provide background information about drinking water protection as it relates to private domestic wells.

Since 1981, OHA has regulated drinking water with authority delegated by the Environmental Protection Agency and through the Oregon Drinking Water Quality Act. The purpose of the act is, in part, to ensure that all Oregonians have safe drinking water, provide a simple and effective regulatory program for drinking water systems, and provide a means to improve inadequate drinking water systems. In Oregon, a “public” or “regulated” water system means a drinking water system that has more than three service connections, or supplies water to a public or commercial establishment that operates a total of at least 60 days per year, and that is used by 10 or more individuals per day. Public water systems must test, treat, monitor and report on drinking water quality and system operations to assure their consumers have safe drinking water.

Approximately 20% of Oregonians rely on private domestic wells to provide safe drinking water. Private well owners are encouraged to test their wells annually and take steps as needed to treat their drinking water, maintain their wells and delivery systems, and to be stewards of the quality of their ground water. The Domestic Well Testing Act of 1989 requires well owners to test their domestic wells for bacteria, nitrate and arsenic during a real estate transaction and to share those results with the prospective buyer as well as with OHA.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided a two-year funding opportunity to start Oregon's Domestic Well Safety Program. The purpose of the program is to improve the lifelong health of Oregonians through the promotion of domestic well safety to consumers throughout the state. The program is collecting and analyzing Domestic Well Testing Act data and other existing data to identify areas at risk. The program partners with local health departments and water information providers to communicate risks and promote domestic well safety. As the current two-year funding opportunity draws to a close, the program is encouraged by efforts to support this public health practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now, and will make myself available to answer any additional questions later on.